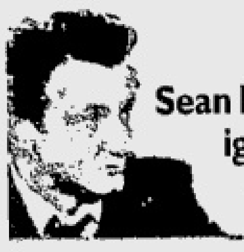


■ Saturday Special / A3-1

Sean Penn, Nicole Kidman ignite big screen in cerebral thriller

Outstanding Filipino films to be showcased at Cannes

■ World / A10

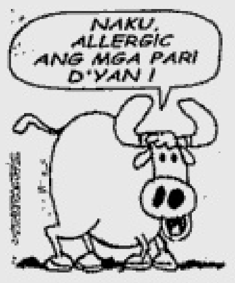
Koizumi apologizes for Japan's wartime atrocities

■ News / A2

Operation Clean Hands files plunder case against former AFP comptroller

■ Super / C1

Sexologist's protest brings condoms to the Vatican


NAKU, ALLERGIC ANG MGA PARI D'YAN !

VATICAN CITY—Condoms are "medicine."

An Italian sexologist handed out condoms in the Vatican's St. Peter's Square Thursday in protest over the Roman Catholic Church's prohibi-

SEXOLOGIST'S/ A22

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Lawyers group eyes 'Jose Pidal' for tax evasion probe

By Michael Lim Ubac

IF PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's tax men won't touch her brother-in-law, Negros Occidental Rep. Ignacio Arroyo, the anti-graft lawyers group Operation Clean Hands (OCH) will.

According to OCH chair Frank Chavez, Arroyo has to explain why he did not declare the

LAWYERS/ A6

Higher power rates OKd

Total increase of P1.04 /kWh to be reflected in June billings

By Abigail L. Ho

CONSUMERS can expect higher electricity bills next month as the Energy Regulatory Commission yesterday announced it had approved an additional 5.56 centavos per kilowatt-hour (kWh) increase in the rates charged by the National Power Corp., the state-owned power generator.

The new rate hike will be added to the 98 centavos per kWh increase that the ERC provisionally approved last September, which would peg the Napocor final rate hike at about P1.04 per kWh.

The rate increase is to take effect on April 26 and power distributors like the Manila Electric Co. that buy power from Napocor are likely to pass on the new rates to their customers by the June billing cycle, said ERC head Rodolfo Albano.

Napocor president Cyril del Callar said the new rate hike would mean an average P180 per month increase for consumers using an average of 200 to 300 kWh.

By region, Napocor generation rates will go up to P3.85 per kWh in Luzon, P3.05 per kWh in the Visayas and P2.12 per kWh in Mindanao.

The increased tariff comes at a time when the economy is struggling under high oil prices and rising inflation and is sure to come under intense public opposition.

Analysts have said that higher power rates would help speed up the privatization of the debt-ridden Napocor, whose debts and losses have been the biggest strain on the country's shaky financial situation.

Albano said Napocor would generate additional annual revenues of P112 billion as a result of the rate increase.

Nonito Bernardo, vice president at the Power

HIGHER/ A20

Fans there for Nora as she pleads not guilty

THIS IS FOR REAL. Nora Aunor appears in a starring role at the Los Angeles Airport courthouse for her arraignment on a charge of possession of shabu. In supporting roles are defense attorneys Sherwin Edelberg (left) and Claire Espina. AP

By Ruben and Janet Nepales
PDI LA Correspondents

LOS ANGELES, California—Stirring the same excitement she did as a movie superstar in the Philippines, Nora Aunor appeared before a US court Thursday and pleaded not guilty to a charge of drug possession.

Such was the commotion she caused among her fans, who came to the courthouse in droves, that a photographer from The Associated Press news agency asked: "[Is she] as big as Sophia Loren is in Italy?"

"Way bigger!" this INQUIRER correspondent said.

Dressed in black pantsuit and a white shirt, Aunor looked calm and relaxed when she appeared Thursday before Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Paula Adele Maybrey at the Los Angeles Airport Courthouse.

The arraignment took only three minutes.

Aunor is scheduled to return to court for a preliminary hearing on May 26, five days after her 52nd birthday. She requested for a Tagalog translator during the preliminary hearing.

The case against her stemmed

FANS/ A22

National ID critics have 8 months to block it

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.,
TJ Burgonio
and Philip C. Tubeza

CRITICS of the national identification system planned by Malacañang will have about eight months to block it.

"I don't think we can implement this immediately," Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said yesterday in a briefing at the Palace. "I think this will be ready for implementation by next year. There might be partial implementation for agencies that might adopt it immediately, but I don't think so."

Executive Order No. 420, which President Macapagal-Arroyo signed on April 13 and which was deemed to take effect 60 days hence, requires all state agencies and government-owned and -controlled corporations to harmonize their ID systems.

But Boncodin said that because of logistical constraints and for practical purposes, state agencies would require more time to finalize the format, the supplier, and the mechanics of the system.

She clarified that the prescribed 60-day adoption period of EO 420 did not set the date for the full implementation of the system but merely the deadline for the completion of the implementing rules.

"I've discussed it with [Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo] Neri, and he said the 60-day period was [for threshing] out the details of the program, such as whether the distribu-

NATIONAL/ A6

Medical 'apocalypse' looms

SOMETIME in the near future, the Philippines will run out of anesthesiologists.

Obstetricians are also a dwindling breed, and pediatricians may not be far behind.

They are among 8 million Filipinos—nearly one-tenth of the population—working abroad, abandoning their poor homeland for better paid, but lesser skilled jobs overseas.

"I call it medical apocalypse, the end of medical practice in the Philippines," Philippine Medical Association president Bu Castro says.

The brain drain is so huge it is threatening the very fabric of the nation.

Castro says 30 percent of the country's 100,000 registered doctors have migrated to North America.

The Philippines has less than 1,000 anesthesiologists and a single practitioner juggles the needs of the surgeons in the northern coast of Mindanao.

Medical school enrollment plunged 20 percent last year and one school has already been forced to close. Ten medical schools and two provincial hospitals are threatening to close.

PMA says that thousands of doctors are going back to school—nursing school—so they

MEDICAL/ A22

FIESTA FEVER!
Summering in the Philippines is synonymous with fiestas galore like the one ongoing at the Cultural Center where dance groups from all over the country are competing in an Ati-Atihan dance contest. ERIK ARAZAS

Slain cop not just hero to hostages

By Jeffrey Maningo
and Allan Nawal
PDI Mindanao Bureau

MARAWI CITY—His desire to help those in need was the reason PO1 Edris Sultan of the Marawi City police got killed, friends of the slain policeman said.

Sultan, 25, was killed in Piagapo, Lanao del Sur, on Thursday during a police operation to rescue at least 14 people, most of them students of the Mindanao State University, who were abducted by armed men earlier that day.

But Sultan was more than the ordinary policeman who risks his life in the line of duty, according to those who knew him well.

Sultan, or Axciel, as he was more popularly known, was more than your typical cop, they said.

SLAIN/ A20

KOFI WITH GMA
President Arroyo meets with United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan on the sidelines of the Asia-Africa Summit in Jakarta on Friday. Annan urged Asian and African leaders to support his push for reforms in the UN that would increase development and boost the UN's role in protecting human rights. *(Story on Page A5.)* AP

'Miracle' Aguirre twins turn 3

VALHALLA, New York—Three years after giving birth to conjoined twins, Arlene Aguirre beamed as her sons celebrated their birthday with Big Bird cake and Elmo balloons, eyeing each other and their preschool classmates from separate chairs.

She recalled the party a year ago, when Carl and Clarence—still joined at the tops of their heads—had to scoot along on their backs and had yet to see each other face-on.

"You remember how it was," Aguirre, who brought the boys to New York from the Philippines in September 2003, said Thursday. "Now they're sitting in a chair like this. I'm happy, and I'm so proud of them."

The twins were surgically separated in August. Their development was severely delayed, but they are slowly catching up to

MIRACLE/ A20

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Visayas will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: ERIKA SARMIENTO, PDI RESEARCH/04/23/05

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy

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Second FRONT PAGE

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Plunder charges filed vs Army colonel

By Nelson Flores

A GROUP of lawyers led by Frank Chavez and Mario Ongkiko filed yesterday before the Office of the Ombudsman a P62-million plunder case against Lt. Col. George Rabusa, the former military budget officer who served under military comptrollers Lt. Gen. Jacinto Ligot and Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia.

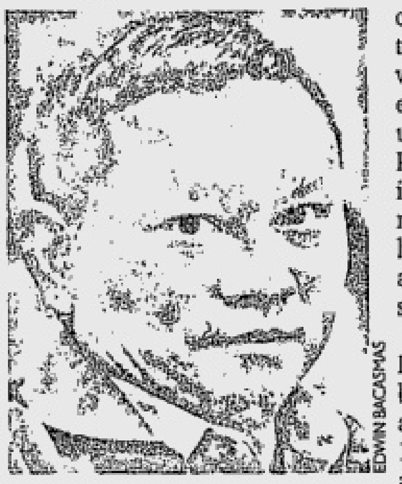
In an 11-page complaint, Chavez and Ongkiko, representing Operation Clean Hands, an organization against graft and corrupt practices in the government, claimed that Rabusa "amassed at least P62,332,405.40 by taking advantage of his position as chief, Budget Division of the Office of the Armed Forces Deputy Chief of Staff for Comptrollership, J6, to acquire the said amount."

Rabusa received a monthly salary and allowance of P26,639.88 or P319,678.56 a year. However, his pay slip showed that his total salary deductions each month was P23,355.88 or P280,270.56 a year, according to the complaint.

Rabusa's take home salary, inclusive of allowances, as budget officer amounted to only P61,008 per year. He had no other work or business interests from which he could derive additional income.

"That virtually leaves respondent a total monthly take home salary, inclusive of allowances, of only P5,084 or P61,008 per annum," Chavez and Ongkiko said.

Rabusa's unexplained wealth included a house and lot in Orlando, Florida worth P8.5 million, four prime real estate in Metro Manila, seven luxury cars, one million common shares of stock in Arevalo Rabusa Templora Inc., 16 bank accounts in the Philippines and a P10-million savings account with the AFP Savings and Loans Association.


EDWIN BACASMAS

RABUSA

"The respondent's annual income cannot possibly afford him the means buying P22,715,000 worth of prime real estate properties, P7,788,000 worth of luxury vehicles and at least P20,542,730.44 worth of savings in different banks, not to mention his expenses for his and his family's regular travels abroad," Chavez and Ongkiko said.

The lawyers claimed that Rabusa opened and maintained bank accounts using "co-conspirators" as beneficiaries in some 16 controversial bank accounts at the Security Bank Corp., Land Bank of the Philippines, Bank of the Philippine Islands and the Armed Forces and Police Savings and Loan Association Inc.

Aside from Chavez and Ongkiko, the other complainants in the case were lawyers Marc Anthony B. Antonio, Don Carlo R. Ybañez and Jero Cel Joseph G. Joaquin. *With Fe Zamora*

GLORIA IN JAKARTA AP

The clean, tailored lines of the coat dress of President Arroyo makes a head-turning fashion statement even in the midst of serious business like the gathering of leaders from 100 countries for the Asia-Africa Summit in Jakarta. The President is due to return today.

We have enough evidence to convict Gen. Garcia, says prosecutor

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

WITH 14 witnesses and 66 documents, military prosecutors said they had enough evidence to convict retired Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia before a court martial.

The Trial Judge Advocate rested its case against Garcia yesterday, five months since the trial started on Nov. 17.

"(Our case) is very strong. We have enough to convict him," Col. Pedro Davila, one of the prosecutors, told reporters during a recess.

Garcia, a former Armed Forces comptroller, is on trial for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman and conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline, or violation of Articles of War 96 and 97, respectively.

Among the prosecution's 66 exhibits were records of sizable bank accounts and luxury vehicles under Garcia's and his wife's name, his statements of assets and liabilities and records of his US immigrant status.

The prosecution's last witness, US Embassy attaché Kevin Peters, testified that Garcia was officially granted permanent resident status in the US in 1995.

The court gave Garcia's lawyers two weeks to reply to the prosecution's formal offer of evidence.

Garcia's trial is watched closely being the most high-profile case of corruption in the military.

The scenario that Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo painted before the Sandiganbayan did not materialize.

The Office of the Ombudsman has charged Garcia with plunder for allegedly illegally amassing at least P303 million in assets while in office.

Marcelo asked the anti-graft court to issue an arrest warrant, saying Garcia could bolt after the prosecution rests its case by simply pleading guilty.

Garcia's lawyer Jose Bautista took exception to this.

"I resent this, your honors, because the implication is that the prosecutors are sleeping on their job and that the members of the court are being taken lightly," Bautista told the court.

"Some sectors are out to crucify the accused just because he's a military man," he added.

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- SM Citybank Appliance Fiesta
  Megatrade Hall, Level 5, SM Megamall, Bldg. B
  March 18 to April 10, 2005
- Savers Mart Angeles
  March 1 to 31, 2005
- SM Installment Festival Cebu
  March 30 to April 10
- Anson Emporium Appliance Fair
  Glorietta Activity Center
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1 killed, 2 missing after big waves batter boat off Mindoro

By Leila B. Salaverria

ONE PERSON died and two others were missing after a small boat capsized off Calavite Point in Occidental Mindoro the other day due to rough seas.

Eleven others were rescued by passing vessels.

The fatality was identified as Buena Zapata, 42. Listed as missing were Rona Zapata, 10, and the boat's skipper, Andres dela Fuente.

A Philippine Coast Guard report said that the motorized banca San Apolinar left Looc, Occidental Mindoro at noon on Wednesday for Mamburao, Occidental Mindoro.

The boat carried eight passengers, six crew members, 30 sacks of salt and two sacks of dried squid.

Several hours later, big waves and strong currents battered the vessel causing it to capsize in the early morning of April 21.

A boat that was passing by plucked four passengers from the rough seas, while the M/Y Kenlis rescued seven others.

The survivors were brought to a hospital on Lubang island.

The PCG has dispatched search and rescue teams to the area to look for the missing passengers, said PCG spokesperson Lt. Armand Balilo.

'Kabayan' leaves for Vatican

VICE President Noli "Kabayan" de Castro left for the Vatican City last night to represent the Philippines in the inaugural Mass of Pope Benedict XVI on Sunday at the St. Peter's Basilica.

The Vice President left for Rome via a Lufthansa flight and is expected to be at the Vatican City at around noon on Saturday.

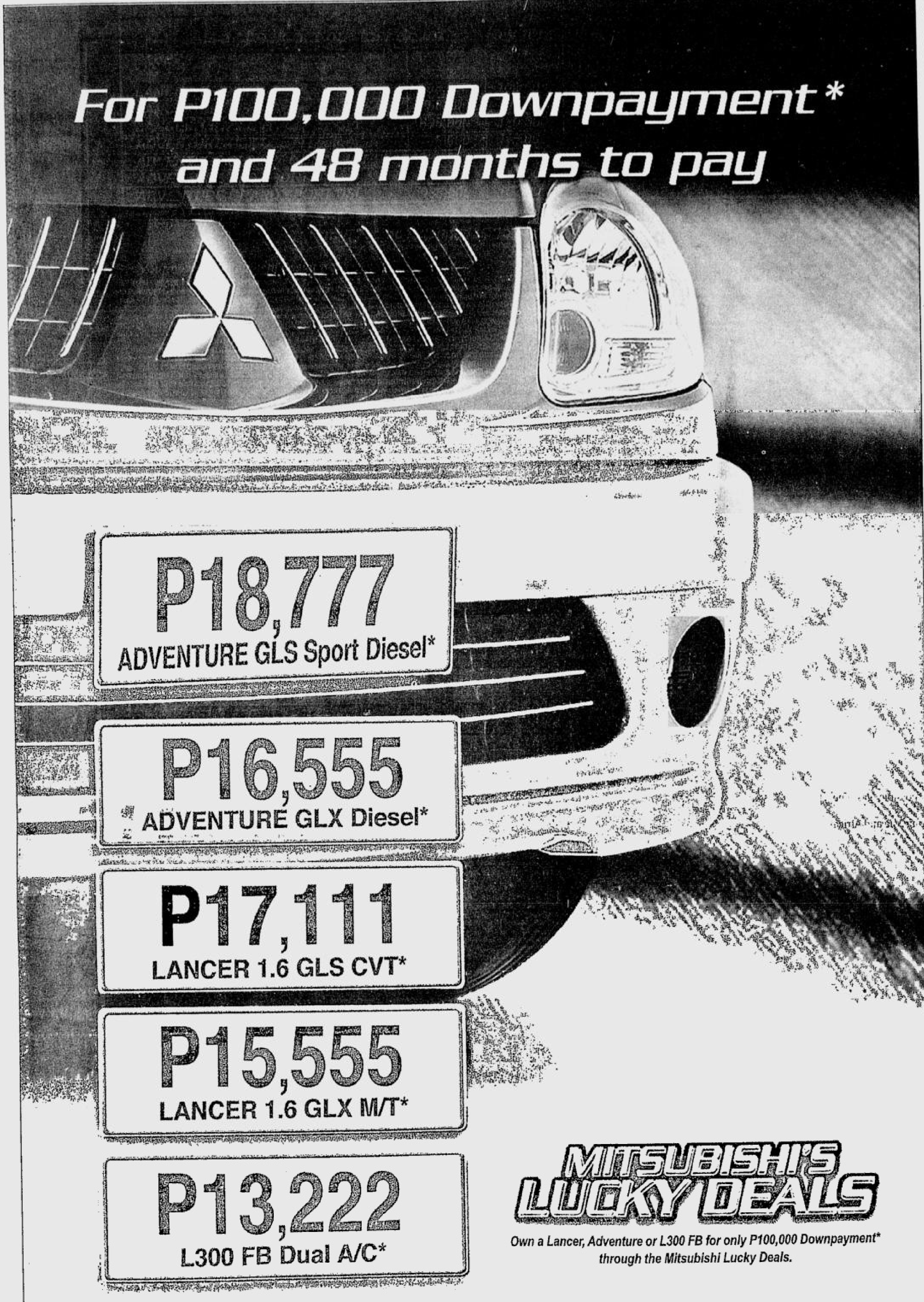
He is expected to be met by the Philippine Ambassador to Italy, Philippe Lhuiller, and the Ambassador to the Vatican, Leonida Vera. The two ambassadors will assist the Vice President during his stay at the Vatican City.

While at the Vatican, the Vice President, who is also the Presidential Adviser for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), will hear Mass with the Filipino community. Italy is host to thousands of Filipino overseas workers.

The Vice President and other heads of delegations are expected to meet with Pope Benedict XVI after the inaugural Mass.

On Monday, De Castro will leave Italy for Santiago, Chile to represent the Philippines in an international gathering of housing leaders from April 26 to May 1. The Vice President is also the concurrent chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council.

He is expected to return to the country on May 3.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ADVENTURE GLS SPORT GAS M/T	795,000	139,000	21,170	14,807	13,467
ADVENTURE GLS SPORT DSL	805,000	141,000	21,436	14,993	13,636
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Palace upbeat on VAT

By Christine Avendaño and Juliet Labog Javellana

JAKARTA (via PLDT)—Malacañang yesterday expressed confidence that Congress would come around to President Macapagal-Arroyo's position for them to approve a final value-added tax rate of 12 percent.

Palace officials yesterday piled on the pressure on the senators—who remain adamant on maintaining the VAT rate at 10 percent—a day after the President made it clear that she wanted Congress to come up with a reformed VAT bill fixing the rate at 12 percent.

The measure remains deadlocked in the bicameral conference committee which is trying to reconcile the versions of the Senate and the House, which is for increasing the rate to 12 percent.

"It is a time of reckoning not only for our congressional leaders but also for our people," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, who is here with the President for the Asian-African summit.

Bunye said legislators and the people have the option either to "swallow the bitter pill now to stop our fiscal malaise or postpone the treatment for later and aggravate the pain in the long run."

"But we maintain our confidence in both the pragmatism and patriotism of our legislators as well as their collective will to put their stake on the line in support of the president, who has nothing in mind but the public interest," he said.

P1-B tax take seen from BIR drive

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and TJ Burgonio

MALACAÑANG expects to realize a tax windfall of up to P1 billion from the Bureau of Internal Revenue's crackdown on tax-dodging, high-profile entertainment personalities and professionals.

The tax bonanza will come largely from the psychological impact of having popular show biz personalities like movie star Richard Gomez and singer Regine Velasquez being shamed and haled to court for tax evasion, according to Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin.

By taking on these popular personalities, the BIR was sending a clear signal to all taxpayers that the government was serious in going after tax evaders, said Boncodin.

"We expect the program (Run After Tax Evaders) to boost our income tax collections by from P500 million to P1 billion this year with higher compliance from taxpayers," she said at a briefing in Malacañang yesterday.

The BIR filed tax-evasion charges the other day against Velasquez for allegedly failing to file the correct tax returns. Gomez was similarly charged last week.

Boncodin said the RATE might be unpopular but it is expected to deliver the goods, said Boncodin.

She expressed confidence that the high-profile cases would prompt more professionals like doctors, lawyers and entertainers—the sectors notoriously known for under-declaring their earnings—to properly file their income tax returns.

She said the BIR was not deliberately going after popular personalities like Gomez and Velasquez.

"It just so happened that the BIR has an open-and-shut case against these two, that is why it filed the cases," she said.

The budget secretary admitted to being a fan of Velasquez, dubbed Asia's songbird.

Boncodin said there were other popular personalities on the BIR's hit list but she said tax investigators apparently needed more time to gather the evidence.

Velasquez has been charged for failing to declare P3.75 million in income from endorsing Nestle products in 2003.

Gomez is alleged to have failed to file returns in 2001, 2002 and 2003. The two stars face jail time of between one year and 10 years.

The government is projecting a budget deficit of P180 billion this year but Boncodin is confident that there would be a lower financing shortfall with improvements in the tax collection, revenues from new taxes and savings from cost-cutting measures.

She said the new tax measures approved and set to be approved by Congress would be expected to start contributing to the government's coffers by the fourth quarter.

But administration Sen. Joker Arroyo said that instead of filing new tax-evasion cases, the government should pursue the prosecution of the thousands of such cases that remain "idle and pending" in court awaiting resolution.

"When the government files new cases, these will suffer the fate as those that are pending," Arroyo said.

Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla said the BIR campaign should target not just celebrities but also "ultra-rich individuals."

GMA warns high oil prices may cause recession

By Christine O. Avendaño

JAKARTA (via PLDT)—President Macapagal-Arroyo warned on Friday that unless high oil prices were cut, they could trigger a global economic recession and create a window for terrorists.

In a keynote speech at the two-day summit of Asian and African leaders in Jakarta, featuring some of the world's leading oil consumers, Ms Arroyo said that unsustainable prices were driving many countries to the brink of financial instability.

"There's no question that the rising price of oil has the potential to put the brakes on economic expansion," Ms Arroyo said, urging "collective action" toward preventing an economic crisis that could be triggered by "unsustainable" level of crude oil prices.

"While there has been some softening of oil price in the past few days, the trend could worsen to levels that could halt economic growth or even prompt a global recession," she said.

Oil prices rose further in Asian trade Friday as refinery problems in the United States sparked concerns over a possible gasoline supply shortage, dealers said.

"It is stripping oil-importing Asia and Africa of our ability to manage for global competitiveness. It is preventing us from pursuing our economic development programs with vigor. It is requiring us to face the specter of economic decline," she said.

Ms Arroyo described increasing poverty and a widening gap between rich and poor countries as a result of high oil prices as "a toxic formula that could increase global terrorism." "I call on the Asia-Africa summit to do its share in pushing for greater stability in oil prices," she said. *With AFP report*

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, April 23, 2005
4th Week of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 13:44-52
Gospel: John 14:7-14

Jesus said to his disciples, "If you know me, you will know the Father also; indeed you know him and you have seen him."

Philip asked him, "Lord, show us the Father and that is enough." Jesus said to him, "What! I have been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever sees me sees the Father; how can you say: 'Show us the Father?' Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

"All that I say to you, I do not say of myself. The Father who dwells in me is doing his own work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; at least believe it on the evidence of these works that I do.

"Truly, I say to you, the one who believes in me will do the same works that I do; and he will even do greater than these, for I am going to the Father. Everything you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. And everything you ask in calling upon my Name, I will do."

Commentary

Jesus continues with startling words: we do know the Father, we've seen the Father! We have seen him in Jesus. But they don't understand that Jesus is God in human flesh, Emmanuel—God with us, the presence of justice, of truth and life so clearly that to see Jesus is to see God. Philip asks him to show him the way and he is chided by Jesus—you are with me all this time and you still don't see? He says look at my works and believe, in fact if you believe that your works will be even greater than his! We need only ask the Father in Jesus' name and all that is needed will be given. We are as close to God as Jesus is, if we believe and act like Jesus does in the world. What are we doing with our lives? What are we asking for in Jesus' name? Are we praying for an end to violence and war? Are we speaking the truth to all? Are we siding with the poor, the victims of violence and evil? Are we standing with Jesus and can we say—look at my works and believe in the God of Jesus who is Father to us all?

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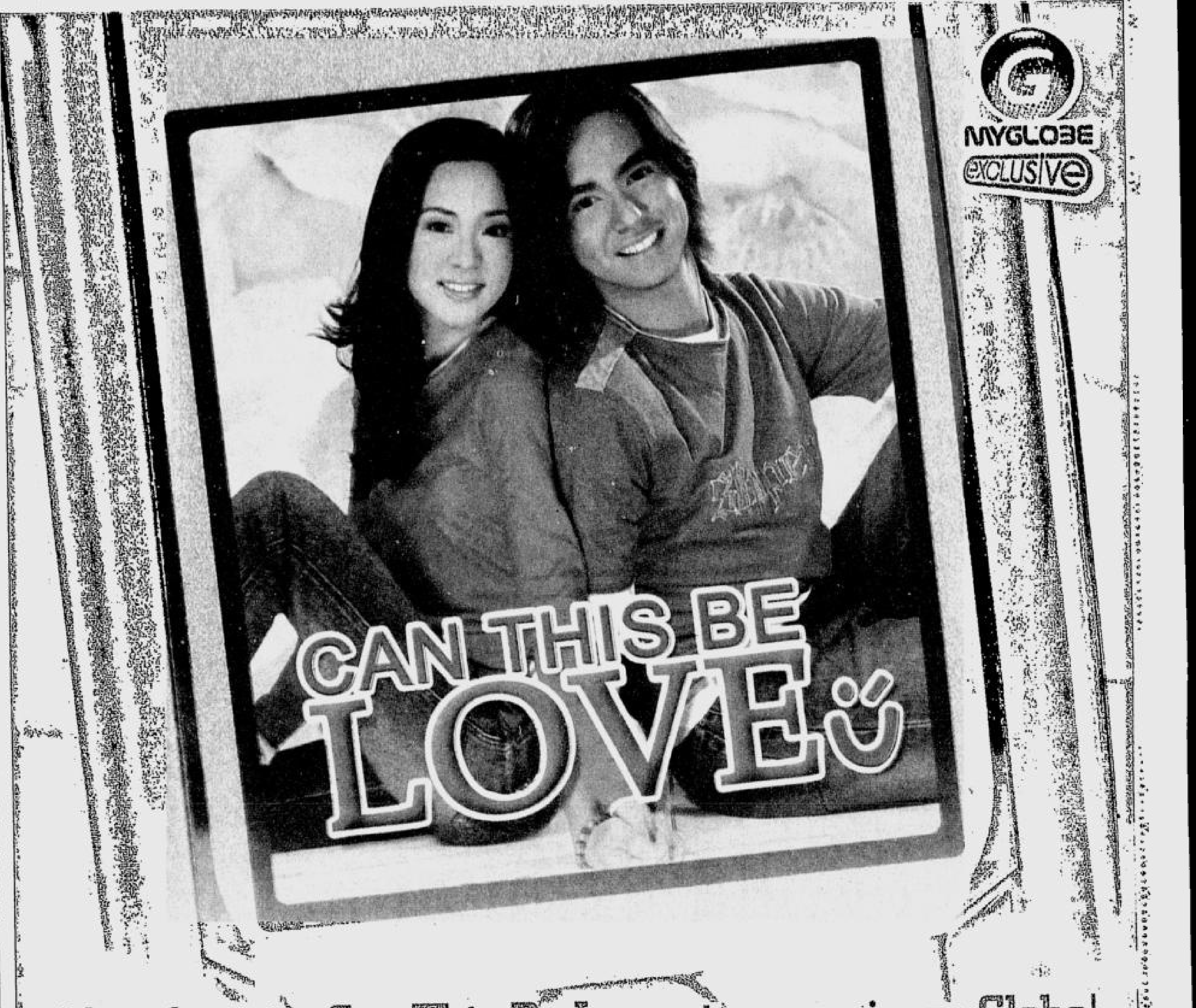

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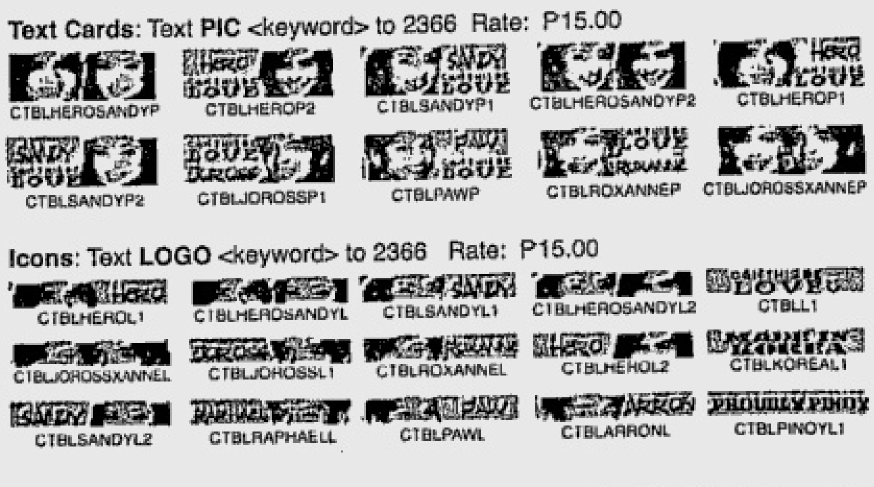

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National ID critics have 8 months to block it

From page A1

tion of the IDs would be centralized or allowed through various agencies adopting the same format," Boncodin said.

No basis for paranoia

In Jakarta, where Ms Arroyo is on a working visit, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye sought to stem the tide of protest by saying that there was no basis for the "paranoia" over the proposed ID system.

"We are not fomenting a surveilled society," Bunye said.

He said that contrary to critics' declared fears of human rights violations, a national ID system would "enable us to interact more closely and more efficiently with government as well as private institutions."

Engaging in shortcuts

But Senators Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Joker Arroyo warned the President that she risked being overturned by the judiciary.

"Why is Malacañang insisting on implementing a system that has been declared illegal by the Supreme Court?" Arroyo said in a phone interview. "Malacañang cannot engage in shortcuts. What's puzzling is [its] penchant for doing things the wrong way."

Pimentel said Ms Arroyo had been misled by her advisers into believing that she could implement such a system by "executive fiat."

He said EO 420 ran counter to the 1998 Supreme Court decision voiding a similar administrative order by President Fidel Ramos on grounds that it constituted usurpation of Congress powers.

"This blunder would only derail the government's desire for the adoption of a national ID system as early as possible," Pimentel said.

But Senate President Franklin Drilon said EO 420 would stand the high court's scrutiny.

"The EO is very clear ... that other information would not be revealed without the consent of the citizen," he said. "The matters contained are matters which the citizen had voluntarily given the agencies concerned—age, status, legal matters."

Joker Arroyo, however, said a national ID system should be brought to Congress for legislation to ensure an open debate on "whether it's appropriate, necessary or constitutional."

Pimentel echoed Arroyo and added: "We maintain that the national ID system, which imposes an additional obligation on the people, cannot be done by the President herself. It can only be done by legislation."

Pimentel has a pending measure seeking the adoption of an ID system that limits to the bare essentials the personal data to be gathered from citizens and prohibits the extraction of sensitive information such as criminal records and health history.

Police state

At the House, Akbayan Representatives Mario Aguja, Loretta Ann Rosales and Risa Hontiveros said the proposed ID system was an ineffective way to ward off terrorist attacks.

They cited an April 2004 study by the London-based Privacy International, a global human rights group present in 50 countries, showing that such a system provided "inept protection" against terrorists.

"The plan is more suited to a police state than a free, democratic country," Aguja said.

Hontiveros said she feared that Malacañang would use the ID system to target and silence its critics.

"Is Malacañang bent on stifling opposition through coercion and state terror? Akbayan fears that this measure will contribute to the attacks and violence committed against legal Left activists," she said.

Rosales said she believed that the ID system would divert limited resources from pressing development concerns.

"[It will] cost the government billions of pesos to integrate and set up a database. Our limited resources could be better spent to deliver basic social services like building more classrooms," she said, adding:

"I would rather have the government seriously investigate the summary execution and disappearance of activists all over the country."

But Eastern Samar Rep. Marcelino Libanan of the ruling Lakas said: "There is no need to be apprehensive or alarmed. It's not a dossier system to identify miscreants or enemies of the state, although it would make it more difficult for criminals to steal the identities of innocent persons.

No cause for alarm

"In fact, EO 420 provides for a strictly confidential use by government of all available data, and the adoption of encryption technology and other systems to prevent data theft and misuse."

Still, the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan said the government could not be trusted with the personal information required in the planned ID system.

"No amount of electronic safeguards will make us feel secure..." said Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes.

"We have no way of knowing how the information will be used. There are a million ways to manipulate such information without us even knowing it," he said.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said the drafting of EO 420 had "taken into account the objectionable feature" in the Ramos AO.

"That AO was all-encompassing. This one will only cover the government-owned and -controlled corporations," he told reporters in a phone interview.

Communists

Asked how the national ID system could fight terrorism when it would not apply to private persons, Gonzalez said: "The government is infiltrated by the Left."

He added that many suspected communists and even terrorists had friends and relatives working in the government.

Private individuals, too

Gonzalez admitted that the national ID system would eventually cover private individuals.

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step," he said, ironically quoting the late Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong. *With reports from Armand N. Nocum and Norman Bordadora in Manila; Christine O. Avendaño in Jakarta*

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Lawyers . . .

From page A1

"Jose Pidal" bank deposits that he had claimed as his, and why he is now the second richest lawmaker in the country.

"He is in the line of fire," Chavez said of Arroyo, youngest brother of the President's husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo.

In September 2003, Sen. Panfilo Lacson said in an explosive privilege speech that the First Couple owned bank deposits of nearly P300 million in campaign contributions to Ms Arroyo. He said the deposits were registered under the name Jose Pidal, which he said was an alias of the President's husband.

But the subsequent high-profile Senate inquiry came to a stop when Ignacio Arroyo took the heat off his brother by claiming ownership of the deposits at Union Bank.

But the issue remains open-ended, and the records of the inquiry are gathering dust at the Senate blue ribbon committee.

On Thursday, Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima refused to say whether Representative Arroyo or other relatives and allies of the President would be investigated under the Run After Tax Evaders (RATE) program.

Purisima said RATE cases were not filed "based on politics."

Open book

But the lawmaker, whom his elder brother described as the "rich Arroyo" at the height of the Jose Pidal scandal, yesterday said his life was an "open book."

"I have nothing to hide," he said, but added that he was willing to face any tax inquiry just the same.

Arroyo, who became a lawmaker in 2004, told the INQUIRER that he declared the controversial account when he filed his Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALN) with the House of Representatives last year.

"It's all there. It's already a matter of public record," he said, dismissing speculations that he had intended to evade taxes.

He also said that by admitting that he had a net worth of P291.6 million (in 2003), he was even considered the second richest representative next to Las Piñas Rep. Cynthia Villar.

'Not yet'

In a separate interview, Chavez said he was not exactly training his sights on Arroyo.

"Not yet," said the former solicitor general, adding that he was still collating evidence.

"But [Arroyo] has a lot of explaining to do. [It was not yet declared] when he assumed office in 2004 ... Where was he keeping it? Now that he is a public official, he should explain it," Chavez said.

He also pointed out that Arroyo still had tax liabilities for failing to declare the money in his previous income tax returns.

Arroyo, however, retorted that the money was not subject to income tax.

"That's not income. I never said that. Those are private funds," he said, adding that the Union Bank account contained "campaign funds" donated by businessmen. *With a report from Fe Zamora*

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No pay hike for gov't men

MALACAÑANG favors higher wages only for workers in the private sector but not for over a million state workers.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin admitted yesterday that the government still has no funds to raise the salaries of government employees even after Malacañang endorsed the wage hike petition of private workers at the regional wage board.

Boncodin said the hands of the Department of Budget and Management were tied on the wage hike issue because the 2005 budget provides no allocation for additional salaries this year.

She said that the earliest the government workers could get a wage hike was next year. "We really don't have any money for that," Boncodin said.

Government workers are demanding an across-the-board increase of P3,000 a month but the Department of Labor and Employment has rejected this demand because it would entail roughly P60 billion in additional government spending or a third of the P180 billion budget deficit.

The last time the government raised the pay of its workers was in 2001.

Last week, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said it was about time that the regional wage board tackle the petition of labor unions to increase the minimum wage by P125 per day in view of the impending transport fare hike and spiraling inflation.

This was a big turnaround in the Palace's stand on the wage hike since President Macapagal-Arroyo has repeatedly ignored pleas by the labor sector for higher wages in her four years in office.

Bunye said increasing the minimum wage should help the masses cope with the unabated increase in oil prices that has pushed up the costs of basic goods and services. *Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

Erap seeks leave to attend ma's 100th birthday party

By Nelson F. Flores

DOÑA Mary will turn 100 on May 2.

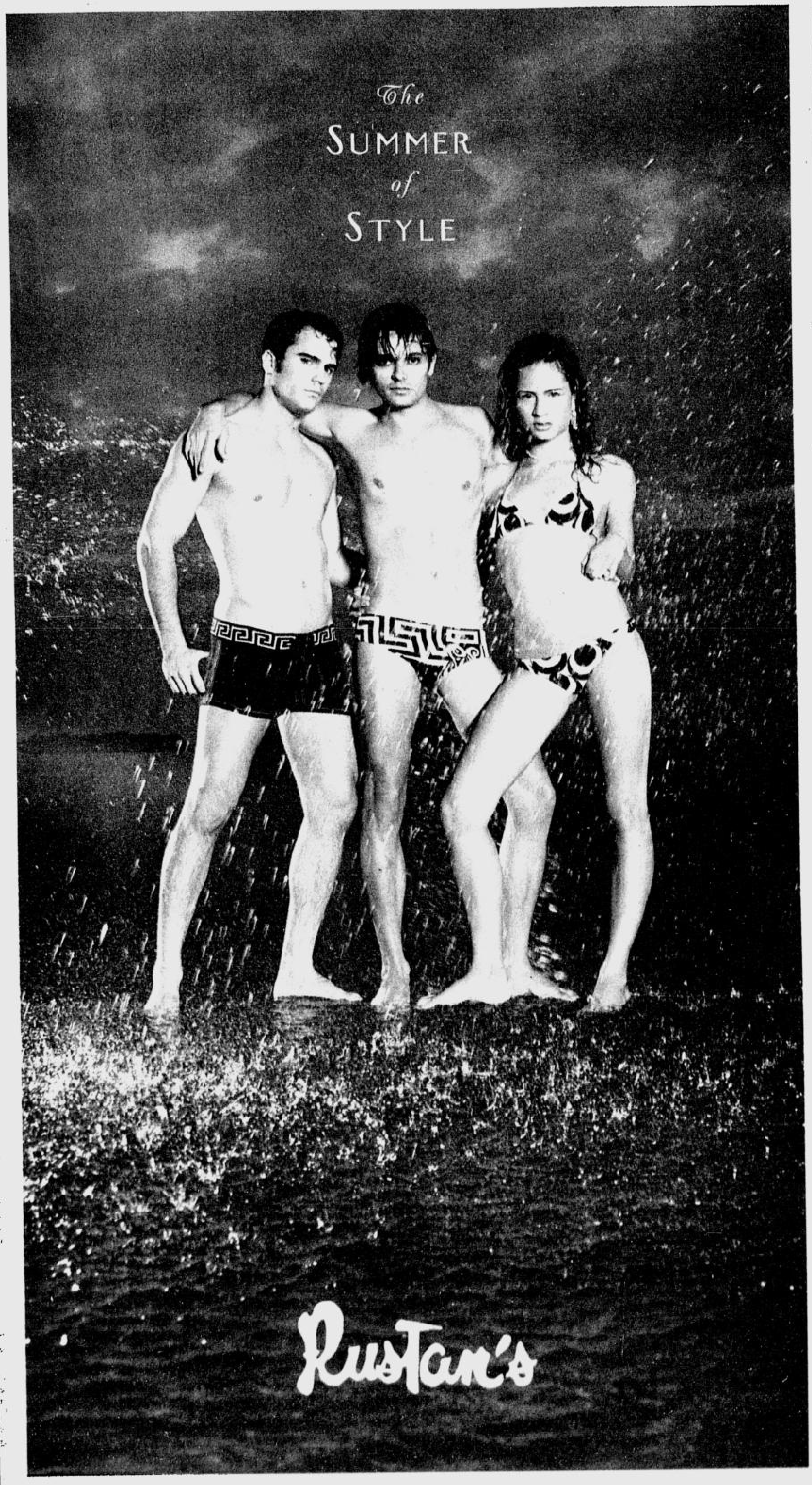
Deposed President Joseph Estrada yesterday asked the Sandiganbayan for permission to attend his mother's 100th birthday party at the Manila Hotel.

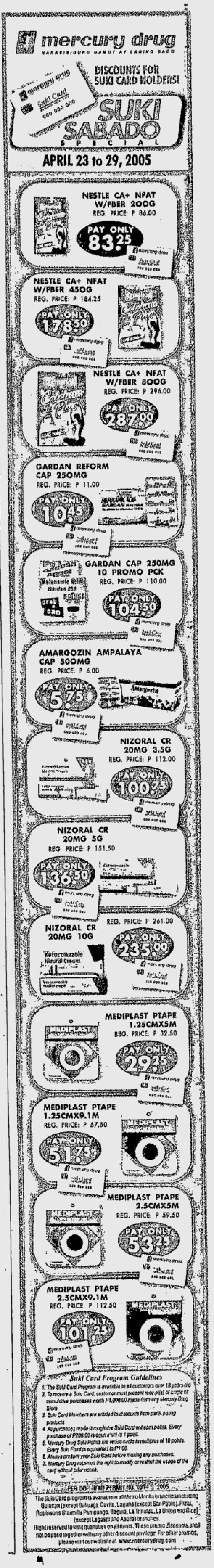
Through his lawyer Rene Saguisag, Estrada asked the anti-graft Court's Special Division to let him attend the 4 p.m. thanksgiving Mass for his mother, followed by a get-together of the Estrada family.

Saguisag, in a three-page motion, also asked the court to allow Estrada to remain out until 11 p.m. before returning to his Tanay rest house where he is detained for multi-million peso plunder charges filed by the government.

He noted that despite the inconvenience of the trip, mothers, in our culture, hold a special place in their children's hearts. He said Estrada would be transported "subject to the usual security conditions."

Saguisag said his client was "not unmindful" of his two previous granted requests, like the April 12 visit of Susan Roces and his April 19 birthday celebration. However, he could not just let this once-in-a-lifetime event pass.

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It's official: Paras replaces Valbuena as PCA chief

By Christine Gaylican and Blanche S. Rivera

IT'S official.

Agriculture Undersecretary Jesus Emmanuel Paras is the new administrator of the Philippine Coconut Authority, replacing embattled former PCA chief Evangeline Valbuena who resigned.

Paras confirmed to the INQUIRER that he has received the endorsement letter of President Macapagal-Arroyo and a separate memoranda from Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap designating him to the position.

But based on the PCA charter, the new PCA administrator must also be confirmed by the agency's Board of Directors to make his appointment official.

The PCA Board is composed of Yap as chair, retired Gen. Virgilio David, Guillermo Palomera, retired Gen. Federico Ruiz, Oscar Santos and Dunga Lim, all of whom are the President's appointees.

"Without the confirmation of the PCA Board, the new administrator could not assume office," explained former PCA Administrator Danilo Coronacion in a separate interview.

PCA sources said the Board will hold a special session on Monday and will possibly take up Paras' appointment as administrator.

The source noted that Ms Arroyo's endorsement letter for Paras was received by PCA on April 6. Thus, the resignation letter filed by Valbuena on April 13 could be accepted or ignored by Malacañang.

Getting the support of PCA employees and coconut farmers is the immediate concern of Paras.

Paras said he would also try to reach out to militant farmers' groups who oppose his appointment and call for Valbuena's reinstatement in the PCA.

"Definitely I'll have to sit down with them and discuss their concerns," he said, adding a dialogue with the farmers was a priority when he takes over the PCA.

"We serve in government. We cannot choose who we work with," he said.

Paras' appointment to the PCA came amid protests from farmers groups and a P541-million plunder charge lodged against him by a farmer leader before the Ombudsman.

But Paras dismissed the case as a bunch of "false accusations."

He said he did not arbitrarily realign the P541.7 million released by the Department of Budget and Management during his stint at the National Irrigation Administration.

He said the NIA had a "running list" of irrigation projects that needed funding, which was the basis for the allocation of the funds.

The Bantay Marcos Wealth at Coconut Levy coalition alleged that Paras was appointed to the PCA as part of Malacañang's strategy to use the farmers' coco levy for its own purposes.

"That's not true. Those are the farmers' funds; the government is just the safekeeper," Paras said.

He said the government would not spend the coco levy funds as some militant groups have alleged.

"There's no sole decision-maker as to how those funds are to be used, not even the PCA. The farmers will have a big say on this," he said.

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Koizumi apologizes for WWII atrocities

JAKARTA—Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi apologized on Friday for Japan's wartime atrocities and said he would meet Chinese President Hu Jintao in a bid to repair ties that are at their worst in over three decades.

Koizumi, speaking after making the apology in front of world leaders at a multilateral forum, said he would meet Hu on Saturday on the sidelines of the Asia-Africa summit in Jakarta.

"Nothing is produced by antagonism," Koizumi told travelling reporters. "Friendship is most important. I would like to hold the meeting from that perspective."

Asked by reporters if he would meet Hu on Saturday, Koizumi said: "I've been told that we will hold it tomorrow." Officials were still trying to arrange a time for the meeting, he said.

Hu, in a speech at the summit, made no mention of Japan, but pledged China would be a champion of the Third World.

Relations between the two Asian powerhouses have been at the worst in decades following violent anti-Japan demonstrations in China over school history textbooks which critics say sugarcoat its wartime history and other irritants.

The spat puts at risk economic ties worth $212 billion in annual trade.

Addressing the gathering of leaders from 100 Asian and African countries including Hu, Koizumi earlier apologized for the "tremendous damage and suffering" caused by Japan.

"In the past, Japan, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations," Koizumi said at the opening session of the summit.

KOIZUMI

"Japan squarely faces these facts of history in a spirit of humility," he said, adding the Japanese people have engraved in their minds "feelings of deep remorse and heartfelt apology."

The apology mirrors past statements by Tokyo but such an admission in front of foreign leaders is rare.

Thousands have demonstrated in cities across China the past three weekends in violent protests against the Japanese textbooks and against Tokyo's campaign for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

While not commenting on the textbooks in question, Japanese delegation spokesperson Akira Chiba said 99.9 percent of Japan's schools used different books.

But in a development that could stir fresh outrage in China, 80 Japanese members of parliament turned out on Friday to pay their respects to Japan's war dead at a Tokyo shrine that has become a symbol of the animosity. *Reuters*

Slow change likely as Pope Benedict takes over Vatican

VATICAN CITY—When most heads of state are elected, they bring with them a new set of faces, new policies and a change of regime. Not so at the Vatican, where continuity is king.

The Catholic Church is built on 2,000 years of history and while there have been political and doctrinal changes over the years, things move slowly in the tiny Vatican City and newly elected Pope Benedict seems unlikely to change that.

The Holy See has an official population of less than 1,000 people but the decisions its government departments make can change the course of history and affect the spiritual lives of 1.1 billion Catholics around the world.

In the Roman Curia, the Vatican bureaucracy, the secretariat of state is the unit which has the most obvious global impact.

It did the groundwork for previous popes to speak out against the war in Iraq or help defuse the 1962 Cuban missile crisis.

On Thursday, Pope Benedict reappointed Cardinal Angelo Sodano, 77, as secretary of state, the Vatican's most senior job after the pope and a position the Italian has held since 1990.

Prelates in charge of the other nine congregations, 11 councils and seven commissions that rule over everything from doctrine to inter-religious dialogue to archaeology will all keep their jobs "until otherwise provided for."

Vatican watchers were unsurprised because Benedict has spent almost a quarter of a century working in the Curia and knows its members very well.

But some say he will need to sweep through the Curia once he has settled into the Apostolic Palace.

During the long physical decline of Benedict's predecessor John Paul, very few new appointments were made. Now, the Vatican is a place where to be 65 is to be young-and-upcoming and plenty of new faces are waiting in the wings.

"I think the Curia's got to change but it's too early to say how it will change," said theologian George Weigel, who knows the workings of the Vatican well.

"I'm not sure (Benedict) is a flow-chart guy in the sense that he'd want to reconfigure the structures. But he might well want to bring somebody in who does know how to do that sort of thing," said Weigel, who also wrote a biography of John Paul.

Benedict does need to fill one post quickly—his old job, the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the guardian of Catholic teaching.

Media speculated Benedict would choose a man after his own heart whom he could watch over, a solid theologian who will toe the conservative line that won the former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger much criticism from liberals.

The names of various Italians including Cardinal Camillo Ruini, who ran the Rome diocese for John Paul, are floating around as possible replacements, as is Vienna's Archbishop Christoph Schoenborn. *Reuters*

Brazil grants asylum to Ecuador's ousted leader

QUITO, Ecuador—Brazil granted asylum to Ecuador's ousted president Lucio Gutierrez on Thursday as his successor named a new Cabinet in an attempt to restore political stability after a week of violent protests.

Gutierrez, the third president of the Andean nation toppled amid popular unrest in eight years, was still holed up in Brazil's embassy residence in Quito, where he fled on Wednesday after angry crowds stopped him from leaving the country.

A state prosecutor has issued an arrest warrant for Gutierrez over the deaths of two people killed during the protests by his opponents, who accused him of abusing his power and stacking the Supreme Court with allies.

A Brazilian foreign ministry spokesperson said Brazil was negotiating to get Gutierrez out of the country.

President Alfredo Palacio, who was vice president before Gutierrez was fired by Congress, named seven new ministers including defense and foreign affairs posts to try to restore order to the Andean nation.

But his appointment of Rafael Correa as Economy Minister left a nervous emerging debt market unsure of whether the new minister would follow the former president's fiscally responsible policies.

Washington said early elections could be one possibility to help end the crisis. The Organization of American States postponed till Friday a special meeting to discuss Ecuador and whether the Congress had a right to oust the president.

Still, US officials were cautious when asked about recognizing the new government, but said they were working with Quito authorities to help ensure a constitutional solution. *Reuters*

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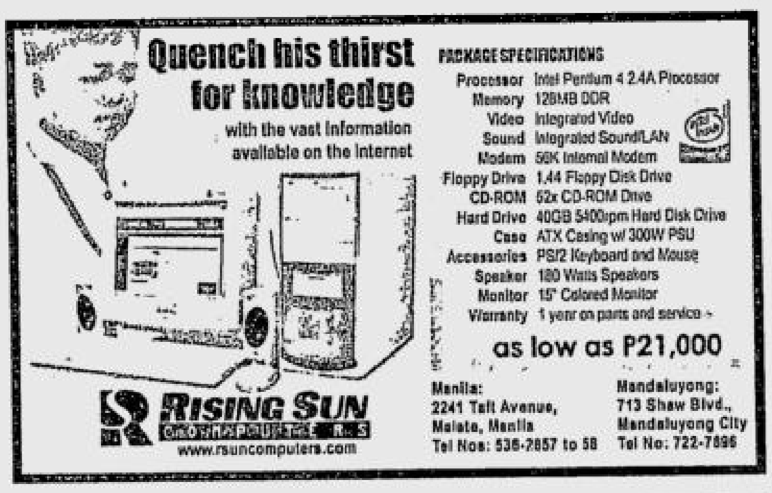
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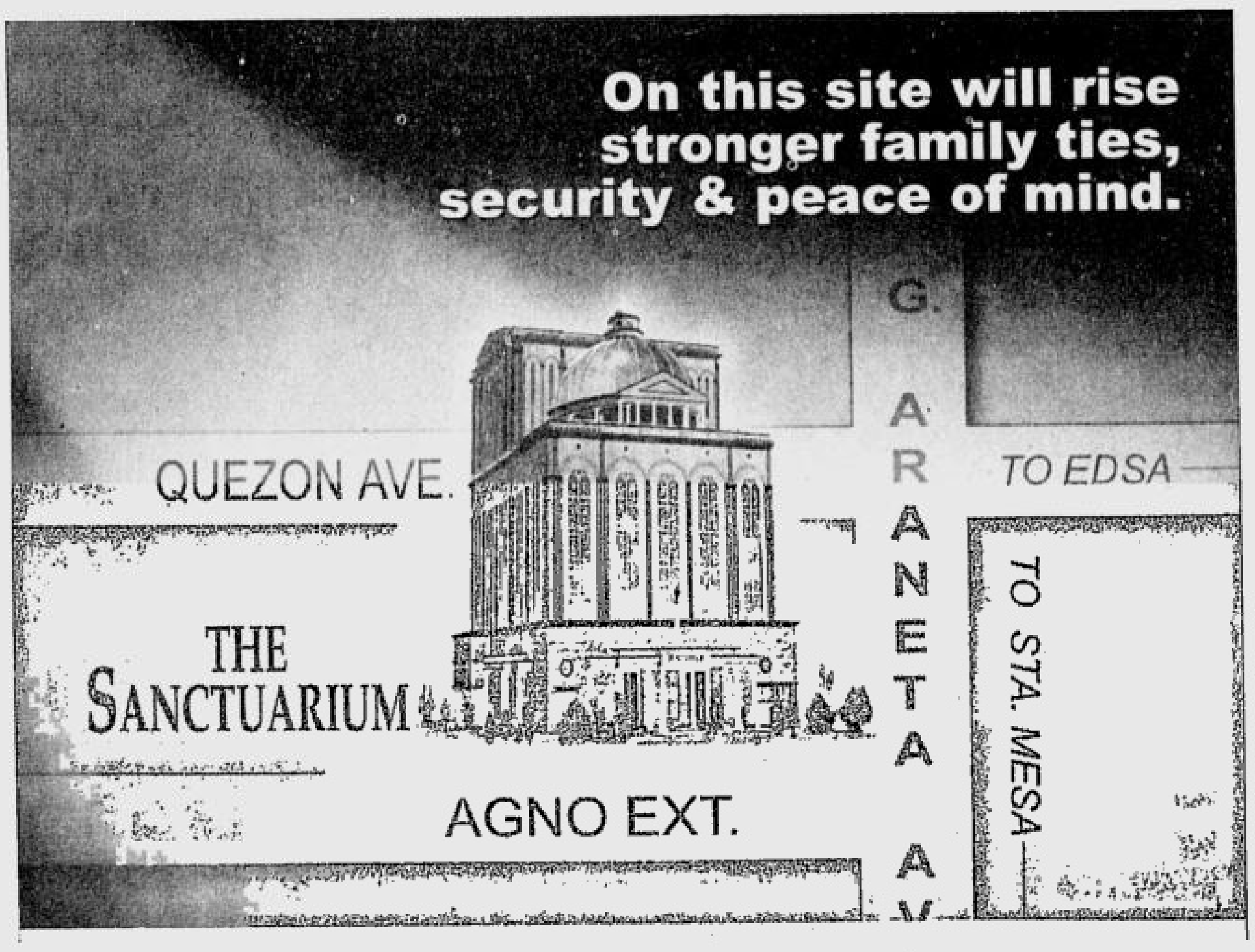
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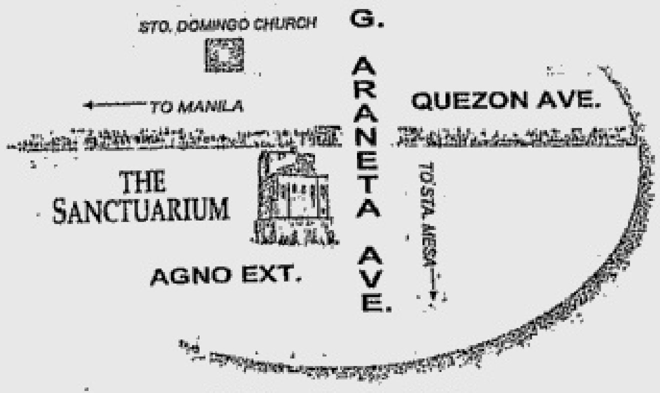

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US Senate OKs $81-B war chest

WASHINGTON—The US Senate on Thursday passed an $81.3 billion spending bill to keep US combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan running and to provide additional help to last December's tsunami victims.

By a vote of 99-0, the Senate passed the emergency spending bill that also funds some new domestic security measures, including the hiring of additional border agents.

Senate appropriations committee chair Thad Cochran, a Mississippi Republican, said the bill would "continue to support the additional funding that's needed for this fiscal year for our troops in the field, for those who are deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere in the world." The fiscal year ends at the end of September.

Last month, the House of Representatives passed its own measure to speed delivery of funds President George W. Bush sought for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The two chambers will try to work out their differences quickly and send the legislation to Bush for signing.

One major area of disagreement is over the administration's plans to build a new embassy in Baghdad. The House deleted money for the construction project, largely due to concerns about record US budget deficits.

The Senate has included $592 million for the project, which would be the largest US embassy in the world.

There are also differences over immigration reform, including new hurdles for foreigners seeking asylum and prohibitions on driver's licenses for illegal aliens which were embraced by the House.

The Senate sidestepped a broad immigration reform debate but did approve an amendment to temporarily lift the cap on foreign workers doing seasonal work in low-paying US jobs.

Pentagon planners say they need an infusion of about $75 billion by next month to ensure the timely delivery of combat materials, including weapons, medical supplies and body armor. *Reuters*

Iraqi rebels down chopper; 11 dead

BAGHDAD—Insurgents in Iraq downed a Bulgarian helicopter with a missile strike on Thursday, killing all 11 occupants, as foreign security workers found themselves increasingly caught in the line of fire.

President Jalal Talabani vowed there would be no amnesty for the killers of Iraqis after the discovery of 60 corpses found in an Iraqi river, which he said were of Shiite hostages seized in a kidnap drama so far shrouded in mystery.

And while insurgents appearing to be stepping up their attacks, there was still no breakthrough in talks to form a government which have dragged on since the Shiites swept the Jan. 30 elections.

The latest attacks brought to at least 10 the number of foreign security specialists killed in Iraq over the last two days.

A US Embassy spokesperson said 11 people were killed in the Bulgarian helicopter crash, among them six Americans, three Bulgarians and two people identified as Filipinos by the Bulgarian defense ministry in Sofia.

The six US citizens worked for Blackwater Security Consulting, which provides security for the embassy and other

"Six passengers who died were Blackwater. They were Americans," the embassy spokesperson said. "SkyLink is often chartered for transporting people around the country."

Iraq insurgents downed the Mi-8 helicopter with a missile, the defense ministry said.

The Islamic Army in Iraq claimed the shooting down of the helicopter, releasing on the Internet a video showing what it said was wreckage of the stricken craft and the corpses of victims.

The three minute video showed the debris of the helicopter in flames as well as the burned-out corpses. The group also claimed to have captured and executed one of the victims.

A further American working for Blackwater was killed near Ramadi when a roadside bomb blew up near his vehicle.

Earlier Thursday, one employee from the British-based Aegis defence services company was killed and another injured when a bomb exploded as their car headed from the capital towards the airport, company spokeswoman Sarah Pearson said.

"Aegis Defense Services Ltd. can confirm that one member of staff was killed in the line of duty in Baghdad today and another person sustained injuries," she said. She gave no details as to their identities.

One Iraqi civilian, travelling in another car, was also hurt by the blast, according to an interior ministry official.

Thursday's attack followed an ambush on the same road Wednesday, when an American, an Australian and a Canadian security specialist were killed when vehicles in their convoy came under small arms fire, their employer, the British-based Edinburgh Risk security firm said.

Thousands of security specialists, mostly former soldiers, currently work in Iraq, helping to protect coalition facilities along with employees of private organizations and foreign news teams.

In other developments, US troops on Thursday shot and killed an Iraqi woman they said had set off a roadside bomb under a military convoy, wounding one soldier near the restive city of Ramadi, about 100 km west of Baghdad.

Meanwhile, an Iraqi interpreter working in the green zone, a protected area which is home to parliament, the government and the US Embassy, was kidnapped Thursday by armed men who grabbed him in a taxi, an interior ministry official said.

Two US marines died in a bomb blast in the volatile western Iraqi city of Ramadi on Wednesday, the US military said in a statement.

And militants loyal to al-Qaida frontman Abu Musab al-Zarqawi Thursday in an Internet statement claimed responsibility for attempting to assassinate Prime Minister Iyad Allawi on Wednesday. *AFP*

Spain legalizes gay marriage

MADRID—Spain's parliament gave initial approval to a law legalizing gay marriage on Thursday in a move likely to rekindle conflict with a Catholic Church that has just elected a new conservative pope.

A packed public gallery erupted in cheers and applause as the speaker announced approval of the Socialist government's proposal, making Spain the third European country to legalize gay marriage.

"It's unfair to be a second-class citizen because of love," Socialist legislator Carmen Monton said. "Spain joins the vanguard of those defending full equality for gays and lesbians."

The proposal, part of a raft of liberal social legislation by the government, has outraged Spain's Catholic church and is unlikely to please Pope Benedict XVI, elected on Tuesday.

The Pope, formerly the Vatican's top doctrinal guardian, has said same-sex unions are destroying the concept of marriage and eroding Europe's social identity.

The bill, passed by 183-136, still needs Senate approval and a final reading in the lower house, but it is widely expected to become law.

However, Spain's top judicial authority has said in a non-binding ruling that gay marriage is unconstitutional, which could encourage a legal challenge.

Only the conservative opposition Popular Party and a Christian democrat party from Catalonia opposed the bill.

Popular Party spokesperson Eduardo Zaplana said his party favored equal rights and gay unions for homosexuals. "But it's quite another thing that an ancient institution like marriage, that is fundamental for the organization of society, has to be exactly the same (for homosexuals)," he said.

Dozens of activists gathered outside congress to celebrate.

"It's an indescribable emotion," Antonio Poveda, an activist for gay rights group Lambda, said. "I'm going to get married for the sake of activism, for love, and for a question of dignity."

Spain's bishops said in a statement after the vote that legalising gay marriage was "damaging to the common good" and threatened social order.

Gaspar Llamazares, leader of the small United Left coalition, said it was a boon for Spain. *Reuters*

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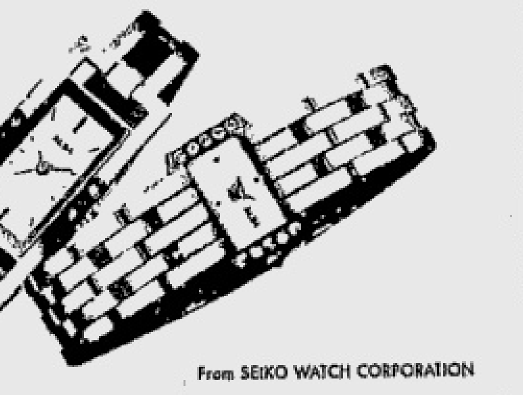

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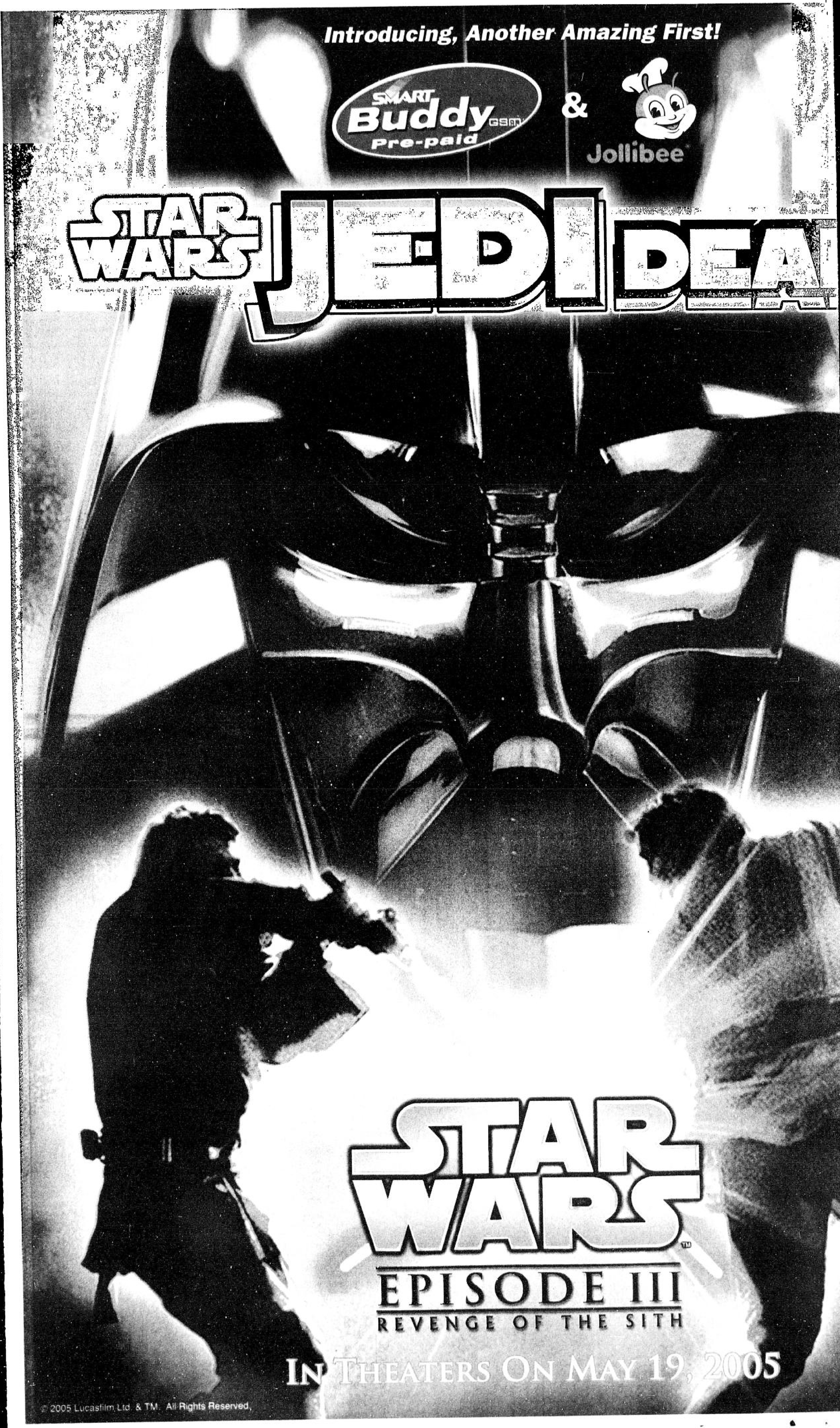
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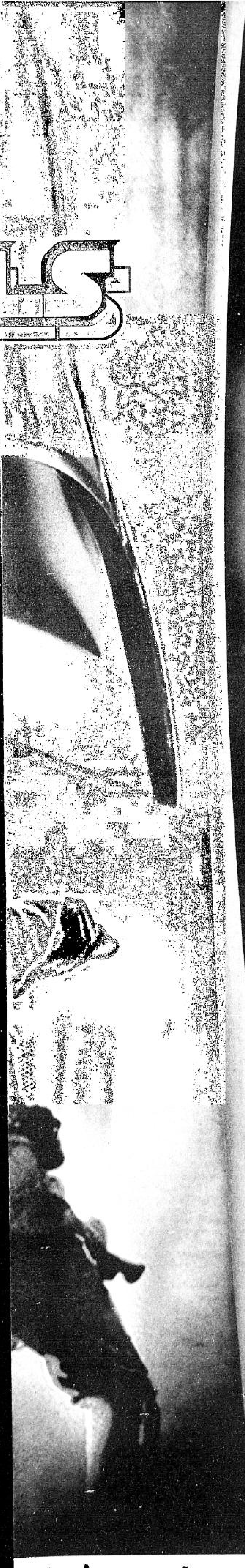

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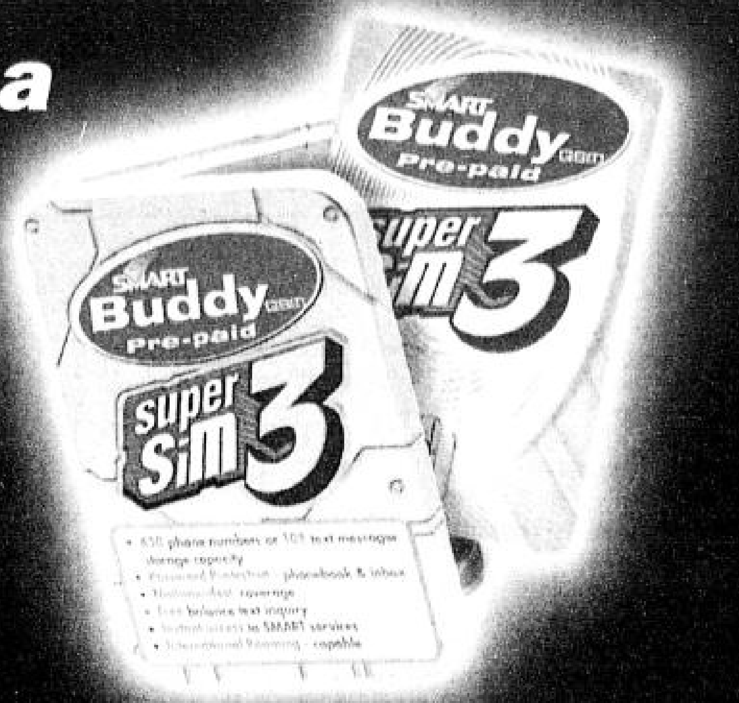
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ISSN 0116-2642 INQUIRER Vol. 19 No. 134

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OPINION

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The Philippine Daily Inquirer, Inc. has its business and editorial offices at
• Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
• P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
• Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
• Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 • Advertising 897-4807
• Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 / 528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.

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Publisher **Isagani Yambot**
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Monumental

EDITORIAL

THE MOTHBALLED Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP) was meant to be a monumental solution. Expected to generate 3.8 billion kWh per year, and projected to save annually $215.4 million on oil importations, it has instead become a monumental problem that has cost our people billions of pesos these past 30 years—and still counting.

Initially estimated to cost $600 million at the start of its construction in 1975, the plant was completed in 1984 at the cost of $2.3 billion (that's around P45 billion at that time, and around P121 billion today, assuming a P54-$1 exchange rate). According to Rep. Joey Salceda, chair of the House committee on economic affairs, the government has paid P67 billion for the plant, and in the next three years it will be coughing up P7.4 billion more. One estimate is that in servicing the debts on the power plant, the government pays $170,000 every day or a total of P3.4 billion a year. By any reckoning, this is a monumental display of wasteful spending for something practically useless, especially by a country in fiscal crisis, with barely enough to meet the basic needs of its people.

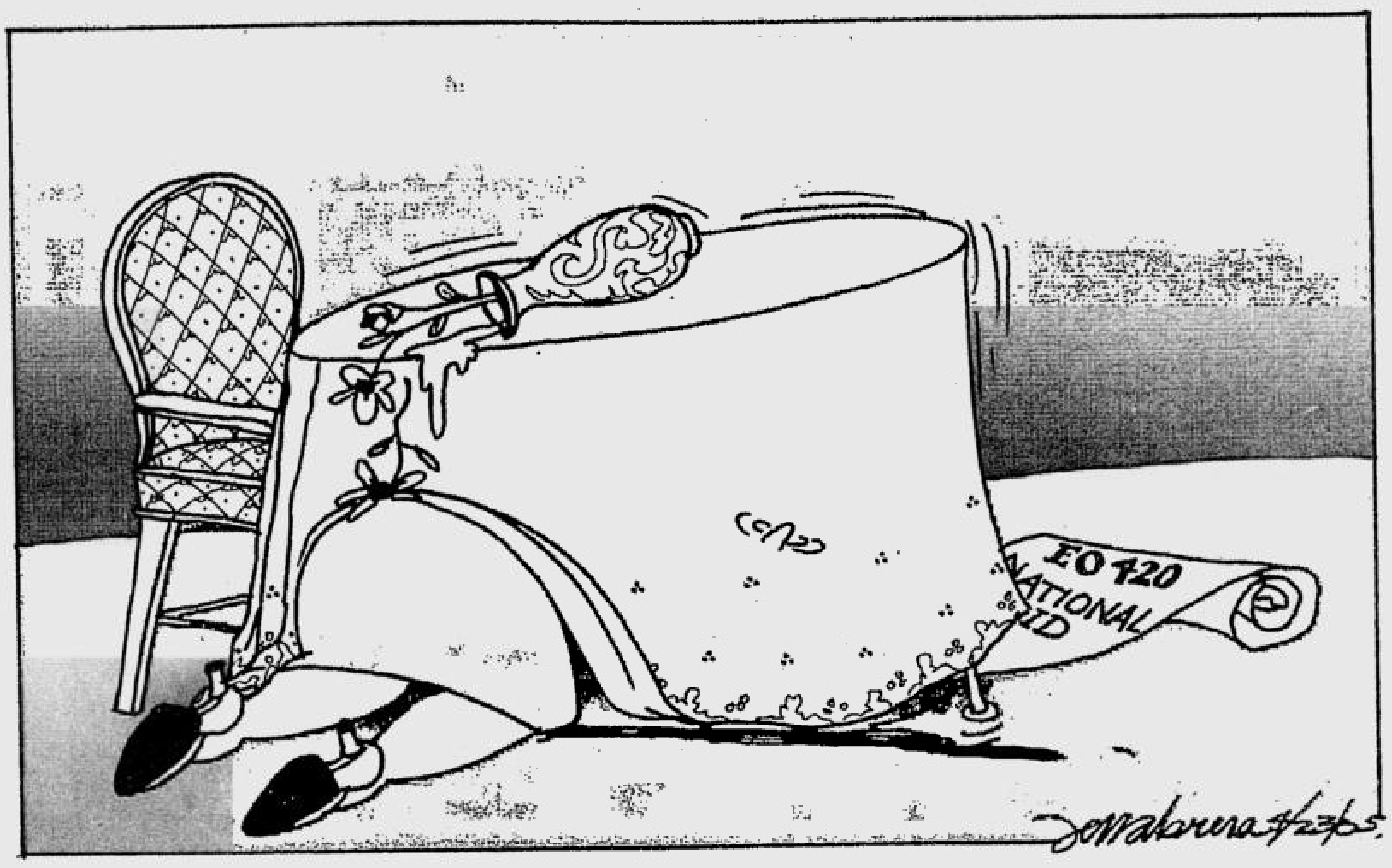
The time has come to make a monumental decision on a monumental problem. This call was aired by Supreme Court Associate Justice Reynato Puno at the Integrated Bar of the Philippines' 10th national convention. Puno pointed out that international experts had taken the position that foreign lenders who collaborate in government corruption shouldn't be let off the hook. (Herminio T. Disini, a golf crony of Marcos, allegedly received $18 million in bribes from two American firms that won the contract to build the BNPP.) Stating what any sensible person knows, Puno said that foreign bankers "knew or had no reason not to know that the loans will be used for some illegitimate purpose like supporting notoriously brazen and kleptocratic military regimes.... there are debts which should be considered illegitimate and therefore should not be paid." Amen to that.

We have always known that the Bataan facility is a product of crony capitalism at its worst, and that it has been the "Mother of All White Elephants" as far as our national budget is concerned. But the Philippine government after Edsa continued to pay for its loans on the principle that the Philippines wouldn't renege on any state obligations, no matter how unfair their origins. The corresponding hope was that, seeing the honorable intentions of the new Philippine government, foreign creditors would give us a break. These pious hopes were dashed, and continue to be dashed; neither the US government, which tends to use its clout to protect its large corporations, or the banks have gone out of their way to help the Philippines out of the debt situation it helped create by tolerating monumental corruption.

What then should be done? Simply abandon all pretenses to paying off that debt? According to Puno, not exactly. He suggests that the government seek either a payment scheme similar to the Chapter 11 clause in the US law for declaring and managing bankruptcy, or to the federal debt protection regulations governing American towns. According to him, such schemes shield bankrupt individuals or entities from the forfeiture of their assets, protect their ability to earn and, in the case of the Philippines, the continuation of public services.

Puno's proposals are grounded on emerging thought among lawyers and economists that it is manifestly unfair—and economically lethal—to keep piling debts and interests on nations whose fortunes have been squandered by dictators. Not least because such debts were not honorably entered into, or negotiated, by the concerned parties, including the creditors from the supposedly more honest Western countries. The increased interdependence of national economies and their integration into an ever more-interlocking global economy have made doing something about the debts of poor nations more important and more urgent to rich countries.

In the last years of his papacy, Pope John Paul II threw his support behind a global effort to condone, and reduce, the crushing debt burdens of developing nations. He was joined in this call by rock stars and politicians. Brazil and other nations have continued this lobbying effort; the Philippines, thus far, has officially been timid, and silent. Justice Puno, after weighing the options, has found our country wanting.



Escape and extradition

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

I WROTE in this column four years ago about the "Five Fugitives" who had fled from this country to escape criminal investigation and possible prosecution. They were Rodolfo Pacificador, for the murder of Evelio Javier; Yolanda Ricaforte and Charlie "Atong" Ang, who are involved in the plunder case against Joseph Estrada; and Michael Ray Aquino and Cesar Mancao, the prime suspects in the disappearance and killing of Bubby Dacer and Emmanuel Corbito in 2001.

Of these, Rodolfo Pacificador has been practically immunized in Canada, where its Supreme Court has ruled against his extradition. With his father's recent acquittal of the same offense, suspicion has focused on Rodolfo as the real mastermind. But he can now thumb his nose on the Philippine authorities who have no jurisdiction over him in his legal asylum.

Two of the five fugitives have been apprehended and are now the subject of extradition as well as criminal proceedings in the United States. They are Ang, a crony and alleged bagman of Estrada, and Aquino, a former drug enforcement agent and close aide of Sen. Panfilo Lacson. Our government is hoping for their surrender to our country soon, but it is all up to the American courts and their own brand of criminal justice.

There is no news about Ricaforte and Mancao although it is suspected that they are also in America. Their whereabouts are probably known to their friends and neighbors, but the government does not know or pretends not to know. It has been at least four years since they slipped out of the country, but it will probably take longer before they are apprehended and returned, if at all. Our officials may be slumbering as usual or are not taking the necessary aggressive steps to secure the extradition of these escapees.

The more intriguing question is why these people were allowed to leave the Philippines, considering the strong suspicions that were hanging on their heads. Rodolfo Pacificador fled to Canada soon after Edsa I to evade arrest and prosecution in the Evelio Javier case, together with his father who was then already in hiding. Ricaforte was the accountant of Erap and had a lot of explaining to do about his financial activities. Ang's shenanigans were exposed at the impeachment trial and were expected to lead to his own prosecution. Aquino and Mancao are the suspected killers of Dacer and his driver but were allowed to leave the country unnoticed (?) on false travel documents.

As if our extradition difficulties with these fugitives were not enough, another equally serious problem has arisen with Faustino Chingkoe and his family. Chingkoe is alleged to have contrived the tax fraud that has deprived the government of billions of pesos he is now using to establish his residence and business in Canada with his wife and children. The host country is likely to deny extradition to a person who can contribute to its economic resources, as Chingkoe intends to do with his stolen fortune.

What is puzzling is why the Sandiganbayan allowed this person to leave the country at all, considering the massive evidence against him. The P2.5 million bond he was required to post—which he did happily, I should think—was a pittance compared to the enormous fortune he is alleged to have stolen from the government and is now using to start a new life in the country that will be only too happy to welcome him. Already he is reported to have bought valuable real estate properties in Canada, including a C$500,000 house for his residence.

The government must be watchful of other possible culprits who may be planning to flee to other countries with stolen wealth they can enjoy there beyond the reach of our criminal laws. In our village, for example, a supposed religious lay leader received loans for fantastic interests from greedy neighbors and suddenly disappeared with his loot, never to be seen again in these parts. This is not an unusual case, for there are many of such swindlers now abroad with embezzled wealth in the millions of pesos.

The recently exposed military men who have amassed tremendous fortunes on their moderate salaries in the Armed Forces are among those likely to run off to foreign lands receptive to criminals with money. Officials who may be implicated in their misdeeds will be only too happy to see them go. That may be the reason why Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia is being handled with kid gloves in the court martial proceedings against him, where he is charged only with conduct unbecoming compared to his prosecution for plunder (with his wife and sons) before the Sandiganbayan.

The authorities must take special care to prevent the other military officials charged with unexplained wealth like Gen. Jacinto Ligot and Col. Jorge Rabusa from leaving the country. Perhaps their respective wives who have taken many expensive trips abroad, sometime with the wife of Gen. Angelo Reyes, should also be questioned. The ladies have returned each time, but their husbands may be able to depart for good like Pacificador and his fellow absconders.

Solving problems by redefinition

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

STARTING with this April's Labor Force Survey, a "new official Philippine definition of unemployment" will take effect. In spite of the efforts to justify that change—read "The New Official Philippine Definition of Unemployment" Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), as well as blurbs found on the respective websites of the National Statistics Office (NSO) and the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB)—the inevitable conclusion after reviewing the facts—and the best that can be said of the change—is that it is not well thought-out and too hastily implemented. The policy implications of the results of such a move, as well as the inevitable if implicit aspersions cast on the competence of the professionals at the NSO, are dismaying. Worst of all, this change brings to mind other changes in definition that were made by previous administrations to hide burgeoning problems or unpleasant truths from themselves and the people. The changes had unfortunate consequences.

Let's look at some of the issues involved.

The main purported reason for the change, per the documents cited above, is that the old definition (the Philippine concept) does not conform or only partially conforms to international standards (the ILO concept). This difference "precludes a meaningful comparison of the country's labor market performance vis-à-vis other countries." Moreover, it produces higher unemployment rate for the Philippines in comparison with other countries.

Former Socio-Economic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas and labor expert Manny Esguerra aren't buying. These usually laid-back economists practically accuse the NSO, the Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics (BLES) and the NSCB of misleading the public as to the so-called ILO definition. There is no such thing, they point out, no rigid standard which all countries must adhere to. What exists is a constantly evolving set of concepts and recommendations which are given expression in resolutions passed in International Conferences of Labor Statisticians (ICLS).

These resolutions bear Canlas and Esguerra out. These talk about a country's statistical system having to take into account specific national needs and circumstances, and merely recommend, to promote international comparability, that "...the main aggregates **should, if possible,** be computed on the basis of both the national and the international standards. Alternatively, the necessary components should be identified and provided separately in order to permit conversion from the national to the international standards." Which is essentially what the NSO has been doing since 1987.

International comparability has never been the main objective for the gathering of labor force statistics. These are gathered "for the purpose of formulating and monitoring employment policies and programmes, income-generating and maintenance schemes, vocational training and other similar programmes." The important thing is not the difference between a country's unemployment rates and another's, but in how these unemployment rates are moving over time in that country itself. Unfortunately, because of the definitional change, unemployment and other labor force data before and after April 2005 will no longer be comparable.

It should also be noted that countries, in gathering these statistics, do adopt different treatments—for working age, reference periods, discouraged workers, to name a few. It is precisely because of these differences that analysts are asked to exercise caution when comparing employment rates across countries—the same way as with poverty incidence.

If international comparability is not a priority, there is no need to change definitions to accommodate it. Now that we've taken that red herring out of the way, the situation clarifies itself. The attraction of the new definition is that it will reduce those embarrassing unemployment rates—by 4 percentage points, using the most recent January and October figures. This way, the Philippine medium-term employment targets are achieved way before schedule!

In earlier years, the country's debt problem was ignored by the simple expedient of redefining terms, so that as late as two months before the Philippines' debt crisis, the Bangko Sentral reported comfortably low debt service ratios, giving the country a false sense of security.

In the present situation, 1.56 million people in one swoop are arbitrarily reclassified from "unemployed" to "no longer in the labor force"? Are their problems now considered non-existent, as far as the policymakers are concerned?

Because of the definition change, the labor force participation rate (LFPR—the percentage of people in the labor force to the working age population) also goes down. So now while the country's unemployment rates will be closer to those of other countries in the region, its LFPR will be much farther away from those of the other countries (63.2 percent with the new definition vs. 74.7 percent for Southeastern Asia and 83.2 percent for East Asia). Now one has to reconcile one of the highest growth rates of the country with a very large economically inactive population. Does the Philippine economy grow best when people are just scratching their bellies?

Redefining unemployment to make the problem go away is unworthy of the statistical agencies. And it is a disservice to the country and the people.

Businessmen nix corporate tax increase

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has exhorted the bicameral conference committee in Congress to pass the pending bill that seeks to increase the VAT, instead of resorting to an increase in the corporate income tax (CIT) from 32 percent to 35 percent, as the Senate proposes. The Senate and the House of Representatives are currently deadlocked over how much VAT to impose, with the House favoring an increase to 12 percent from 10 percent and the Senate wanting to keep it at 10 percent and increase the CIT to 35 percent from 32 percent. The compromise figure that's said to be emerging is an 11 percent VAT.

* * *

GMA's appeal against raising the CIT is sound. I had some talk with foreign finance executives recently and they stressed that raising the CIT as a revenue measure is not a sound alternative since it has seldom worked. One executive said that all it does is depress the business situation even more, making the CIT counterproductive. Another argued that raising the VAT is preferable as it will spread the burden; after all, corporations will pay a higher VAT on just about every item, too.

* * *

In his analysis yesterday in the Manila Standard Today, Australian business executive Peter Wallace argued that the current 32 percent CIT is already the highest in Asia and so adding 3 percent would further discourage foreign investors at a time when investments have become very competitive in the region. Wallace also argued that the difference between 11 and 12 percent is negligible as far as the impact on prices is concerned, but the increase would mean P15 billion more in badly needed revenue for the government.

The problem with our senators is that they don't seem to realize the gravity of the country's fiscal position. What will convince them? *Aanhin pa ang damo kung patay na ang kabayo*? One thing is sure: the gridlock over VAT has convinced many about the uselessness of having two chambers.

* * *

What started as an inquiry by the Senate committee on agriculture, chaired by Sen. Ramon Magsaysay, into the spat between Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap and Philippine Coconut Authority Administrator Evangeline Valbuena, that led to her firing, has developed into an inquiry into who holds the coconut levy funds and how they are disposed of. Valbuena has issued statements hinting that she was eased out by Yap because of her refusal to go along with the project he's endorsing. This was a hybrid coconut breeding project to be set up in Agusan del Sur reportedly at a cost of P8.4 billion, using the levy funds. Yap, however, insisted that the project was still in the drawing board and hadn't even been submitted to the Cabinet and the President, and that the decision to fire Valbuena was not in any way related to her position on that project but was rather due to her poor performance. Between the two of them, however, Valbuena enjoys bigger credibility.

* * *

The P8.4 billion cost of this planned project has drawn a lot of fire. What irked Sen. Sergio Osmeña III was the apparent failure of the witnesses, who represent such coco-levy funded corporations as the UCPB, the CIIF Oil Mills, the Coco Finance, etc., to enlighten the committee on the financial status of their respective institutions. Even PCGG Chair Haydee Yorac was not spared. Osmeña decried her apparent lack of knowledge about the use of these levy funds, when the PCGG is supposed to safeguard their integrity.

At a time when coconut farmers remain mired in pitiable poverty and the government is trying to extract more taxes, the seeming laxity on the part of the levy fund custodians certainly warrants a closer look. Addressing the witnesses, Osmeña opined that if they were not aware of the flow of their funds, chances are that these are gone.

* * *

INQUIRER columnist Johnny Mercado hit it on the head: the mere mention of this hybrid coconut breeding station raises the specter of a similar project undertaken by Marcos associate Eduardo Cojuangco on Bugsuk Island in Palawan in the early 1980s at a cost of nearly P1 billion in coco levy funds. Nothing came out of it.

Former PCA chief Oscar Santos, in a note to me, opines that sinking P8.4 billion in coco levy funds in Agusan del Sur may not be acceptable to the 66 other provinces which contributed to the levy from 1973 to 1982. This is because Agusan del Sur's copra production then was a minimal 0.02 percent of the national production, and its contribution to the levy fund was therefore minuscule. Thus, he stressed, investing P8.4 billion—or about 10 percent of the total levy assets—in just one province with such an insignificant contribution to the levy fund would be "so unjust" to the rest that contributed the 99.8 percent. Santos said that "basic sense of justice" demands the fund allocation be made in direct proportion to the copra production of the provinces during the levy years. He added that it would be better to let the local governments be involved in the handling of those funds since they know the real needs of their coconut farmers.

I agree with him. The administration should study this project carefully, as it seems to stink even before it has started.

* * *

Yesterday being Earth Day, it's relevant to cite the problem with private emission testing centers (PETCs). Last Feb. 22, March 3-4 and 29-30, the DENR under Secretary Michael Defensor conducted sting operations on PETCs in Metro Manila and his team caught 37 such centers issuing environmental compliance certificates (ECCs) without even seeing the vehicles. He submitted the list of erring PETCs to Transportation Undersecretary Ricardo E. Alfonso Jr., but until now the latter has not suspended any of them. Unfortunately Alfonso's inaction fuels rumors that he has a profitable relationship with them. He should explain.

'Halo-halo' memories

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

SUMMER, and our thoughts turn to…*halo-halo*!

For us Pinoys, the hot days and nights conjure nothing less than a tall, chilled glass filled with shaved ice, milk and any number of sweet tidbits—beans, sweet bananas, *ube* jam, *nata de coco*, *macapuno*, sweet corn, melon, colorful gelatin and whatever else catches the maker's fancy—topped with leche flan, a scoop of ice cream or if you're really lucky, both!

The years since childhood are filled with memorable *halo-halo* moments, unforgettable *halo-halo* treats. So rich are the possible variations that it's safe to say no two *halo-halos* are ever the same—yes, even the fast food concoctions with their standardized portions. For a *halo-halo* experience is defined not just by the contents of this chilled treat, but also by the mood and yearnings, the frame of mind and state of anticipation, of the person lucky enough to be consuming it.

My first *halo-halos* were humble and uninspiring, home-made and helter-skelter combinations of shaved ice, evaporated milk and whatever could be found in the refrigerator and pantry shelves on a hot summer afternoon. Sometimes, we siblings even made do with uncooked bananas and boiled camote, and even *aratiles* picked from the tree in our front yard.

Of the commercial varieties, our family favorite was that of Little Quiapo, which had an outlet in Cubao, just a walking distance from our family home. Then we discovered Aristocrat, whose *halo-halo* was topped with generous scoops of *ube* ice cream, such that there wasn't any need any more for drowning the ice in evap. All you had to do was to let enough ice cream melt to mixing consistency and you had a really cool, sweet, purple treat!

But time and maturity have a way of erasing even the fondest *halo-halo* memories. Soon enough, I was no longer content with our home-made creations, or even with the standardized formulas in popular merienda joints that once compelled me to save my allowance for a weekend indulgence.

* * *

THE SEARCH for *halo-halo* perfection has led me down strange and distant paths, indeed.

I remember once driving all the way to Cavite, together with my officemates and our boss, who was a gourmet in the full sense of the word, just to try out the famous Digman's *halo-halo*, a few years before they established stalls in the fast food halls of SM malls. (Don't you love the alliteration?!)

Digman's had just been written about for their then unheard-of audacity to fill their *halo-halo* glasses with 12—count 'em, 12!—ingredients. So naturally we had to verify this for ourselves, all in the name of investigative journalism, of course. We had a hell of a time finding the restaurant, until the townsfolk pointed us down a narrow earthen road where we came upon a huge high-ceilinged hall constructed out of bamboo and *sawali*.

Their *halo-halo*, so Digman's proclaimed, was "eat-all-you-can." After my first tall glass filled with all 12 of their famous ingredients, I decided to really indulge myself and went back for seconds, but this time for a glass chockfull of *ube* jam, which is my all-time favorite sweet and ice cream flavor. The wonderful luxury of spooning sticky gob after sticky gob of dark purple *ube* jam, without having to search for the few tidbits in most other *halo-halos*, remains a comforting memory to this day.

* * *

MARRIAGE brought with it not just a change in civil status but also a radical shift in *halo-halo* habit. The hubby, who otherwise has impeccable gustatory taste, happens to be averse to milk and so will take *halo-halo* only without it. This particular form of *halo-halo* apostasy has raised many an indignant and unbelieving eyebrow in snack parlors across the land. So to soften the impact of such *halo-halo* faux pas, I've had to step up and insist on milk-less *halo-halo* myself.

Maybe that's the reason my search for *halo-halo* perfection kind of tapered off, at least until recently.

I'm glad to announce that I might have just found the perfect *halo-halo*, and you don't have to go searching the wilds of Cavite for it, either. In fact, all you have to do is drive over to Julia Vargas Avenue in the Ortigas area, to the Golf Plaza complex where you'll find Razon's, which I think is the first Metro Manila branch of a well-known Pampanga restaurant. "Worth the trip" is Razon's *halo-halo*, surprising because, unlike Digman's complex concoction, Razon's is utter simplicity.

* * *

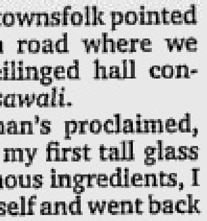
WHILE other *halo-halos* contain as many colors as the rainbow, Razon's is a pale cream mixture, since the ingredients—*macapuno*, sweet *saba* banana, white beans and a topping of leche flan—are all of the same pale palette.

So what makes it so renowned and so popular that the Golf Plaza outlet has already had to expand? The secret, I'm told, is in the milk. Yes, it has milk and even the hubby meekly downs it in its entirety. But this is not evap from a can but carabao milk—rich, creamy, sweet and heady. I must add that the secret is also in the ice, which is shaved to a fine, almost powdery consistency, making each chilled spoonful a distinct taste memory. If you're really a *halo-halo* freak, you can even order a double portion, for double the price, of course.

On my most recent visit to Razon's with my two kids, we had lunch of its other specialties—*pancit luglog*, *sisig* and sizzling *bulalo*—then topped it with *halo-halo*, a double portion for me, of course. When we reached our vehicle, I felt so full I could hardly move. I began to fear the onset of a heart attack, if not indigestion, until, just before reaching C-5, I let out a long, loud burp! Immediately, I felt better. I knew it! All *halo-halo* memories are good memories.

Ah, Love… (2)

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY



Bambi L. Harper

TAKING her lover by the hand, the woman led him to the window where they could see the interior of the house across the road, where a native, a musician of the artillery regiment, lived. "Do you see those women on their knees praying before an image surrounded by burning candles? Well, they are praying to the Virgin that the massacre of all the Spaniards, which is to take place tonight, may be crowned with success, and if you go to the barracks you will also be killed."

(It may strike some people as a rather odd thing—to pray for success or something, which in effect would cause harm or death to people.) Convinced that the information was true and badly frightened, the sergeant hastily took off for the barracks to warn the commander of the guards, a certain Senor Fonviel, who immediately reinforced the guards and ordered the noncommissioned officers to arm themselves. He then sent word about the impending attack to the commanding officers of the other barracks and Governor-General Rafael de Izquierdo.

It was not as though this was the first time that talks about an uprising had reached the barracks, which is why Fonviel did not ask for proof, or demand an investigation, or form a committee to study the matter and advise on a course of action. Before retiring to Malacañang that night, the governor general made the rounds of the barracks that very same night, exhorting the men to be vigilant. Concluding that the rebellion would only be in Manila—since only Spaniards would be killed—the precautions taken were limited to the barracks.

In the meantime, the people in Sampaloc and their guests were having a great time celebrating the fiesta of their patron saint, Our Lady of Loreto. The natives mingled with Spaniards on the dance floors and on dining tables over sumptuous meals in much merriment, with Spaniards going from one house to the other with nary a thought of the conspiracy.

The rebels in Manila and Cavite had agreed that exploding rockets from Intramuros would signal the start of the uprising. What they failed to take into account was that every fiesta in the Philippines in those days ended with fireworks. When the conspirators heard the rockets and saw the sky light up over Manila, they immediately thought it was the signal, forgetting all about the fiesta in Sampaloc. With no means of immediate communications between the rebel groups, there was no way to warn that their plans had been betrayed and the uprising aborted.

At 9:30 that night in Cavite, some 200 natives belonging to the marine infantry at the arsenal and the artillery of San Felipe, and some other marines led by Sergeant La Madrid revolted with the cry, "Death to Spain." They promptly killed the commander of the fort and some other officers, wounded the wife of the former and killed Spanish civilians walking along the streets near the fort.

Lt. Col. D. Horacio Sawa, head of the infantry regiment Princesa # 7, his target—one of the barracks—in darkness and filled with civilians, and the men of the regiment were fully armed. The officer immediately ordered an attack, and drove out the civilians and called upon the troops to perform their duty. Incredibly, some of those in league with the rebels suddenly started shouting "Viva España." and "Death to the Traitors" as well, much to the astonishment of their co-conspirators. Seeing that their allies had turned against them, the rebels fell back to the fort of San Felipe.

The military governor of Cavite, Col. Fernando Rojas, sent his adjutant Agustin Vazquez and a Spaniard, Jose Gomez to Manila. On their way, they were met by a group of civilians in league with the rebels who slew the two messengers in a place called Estanzuela near Cavite.

News of the uprising reached Manila by boat, and two regiments, under General Ginoves, were sent to Cavite on Jan. 21. Upon arrival, the general gave mutineers 24 hours to surrender. At six the following morning, the grace period having lapsed, the general attacked, slew most of the mutineers and took into custody those who survived. Those who were killed were buried in a chapel in the naval yard and their remains reportedly stayed there until the American occupation.

During the interrogations, the captured rebels started implicating others, leading to the arrest of another 13 men who were executed on Jan. 28. On Feb. 8, the leader of the men who killed the messengers at Estanzuela was garroted. Circumstantial evidence, consisting of acts committed during the time of Gov. La Torre's administration, doomed the priests, Jose Burgos, Jacinto Zamora and Mariano Gomez. After a hasty court martial, the three, together with a civilian called Saldua, were garroted in Bagumbayan on Feb. 15.

Meanwhile, the lovers faded into history without even a name. Don't you wonder if the woman ever asked herself what it was that she had done and what the consequences of her action were? And if the sergeant—perhaps, grown old and gray—even remembered that January afternoon, and how a chance encounter changed the course of history?

* * *

Comments to bambiharper@yahoo.com

Love and death

SEVEN days ago, my aunt died of cancer. She was 52 years old—the only sister of my dad, a family of five siblings. Around six months ago, she was diagnosed of having cancer of the uterus. How did we take it? Well, the entire family was devastated. My father died of colon cancer. So did his father, so did his father's brother. And so did many other relatives of ours. My father was only 31 years old when he died.

YOUNG BLOOD

Nina M. Santamaria

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

I've loved my aunt all my life, but I did not feel any surprise at all about to learn she had cancer. I was all too familiar with the affliction, and I knew it would come round and round in this lifetime of mine. I thought I could learn or gain nothing more from it. I was wrong.

Somehow, in my short life, I've seen how a disease like cancer can affect you in the most unexpected ways, long after a loved one has died of it. I began accepting it as a part of life. Growing up an only child without a father gives you plenty of time to think about it. It gives you time to witness and study its effect on the deceased's loved ones, like in the case of my dad: my heartbroken but strong grandmother, my uncles who were resigned but brave about it, the friends who miss and cherish him, and most of all, my mother, who had to rise over the tragedy and will herself to live, to love and raise me by herself.

I witnessed it all. And I had to witness it again.

Cancer, I learned, seems to be both the curse and the gift bestowed upon our family. This realization recently hit me full force on my face, helping me to see God's reasons behind every loss. For every loved one God takes away from us, the love that our family has for each other doubles and grows. We learn to cling to each other tighter, listen to each other better, sacrifice for each other more than we can afford to, and share among ourselves more burden and responsibility than what we think is bearable. The love that one gains from experiencing a loved one's death is infinite.

My aunt's deteriorating health prompted us last month to rush to the States to be with her during her final days. I almost stopped work on all my projects and packed my bags *pronto*. True, part of my excitement was to see my family—going there meant spending time with relatives whom I seldom see. But when I got there, I found my aunt thin, haggard, and almost bedridden; a far cry from the glowing, happy, laugh-out-loud woman we knew her to be. The sight of her in that condition deeply upset me.

We settled in the house to help her family take care of her; the doctors had given up treatment and had pronounced her terminally ill. The next few weeks proved to be both happy and tense for us all. Our daily routine included bathing her, giving her medication, hanging out with her, telling her stories and cheering her up. Being a typical, music-loving Filipino family, we listened a lot to the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and bossa nova. At times, we played the guitar or sang beside her. Her friends, almost family to us, visited everyday. On a good clear day, we would walk her around the park on a wheelchair, which she enjoyed immensely since we would all horse around and make her laugh.

Sometimes she made us laugh. Sometimes, she would show a trace of her beautiful smile. Sometimes, she would cry silently in pain. Many times, due to the heavy influence of the morphine and painkillers, she would say so many unusual things that either amused or alarmed us. At night, we prayed the rosary, all 20 or so of us. We basically surrounded her with all the love we could give, and this love emanated from her to us and back to her, filling the air and the house thick with so much love you could almost touch it.

Her birthday and her son's wedding on the approaching Dec. 25 were going to be a triple occasion, celebration or treat, although we all had fear in our hearts she might not make it till then. But she willed herself to get up and be there for everyone that day, even if we knew she was in extreme physical pain. She knew it would mean so much to her son, her family, and her friends. She had such a positive attitude she made it through Christmas, and the New Year, too.

Until then, hearing of somebody die of cancer had become so trite to me. After that experience, it will always remind me of that special time in my life when we (my family and relatives) tried to make the most out of every minute, every day, and every moment shared.

From now on, every time I'd miss my aunt, I'll think about how she brought everyone together one Christmas season, and the love we all shared because of her. We shall carry it inside us till the day our turn at death comes. For how else does one remember a life?

She was an extraordinary woman, mother, friend and wife. She was my godmother and my idol since childhood. She had the style and the carefree attitude for life such that I always modeled my life after hers. She loved and was loved. She had it all—and she shared it all. We are naturally a brood of happy and easygoing folks in spite of all our losses.

When my father was still struggling with cancer, he requested my mom to play the Rolling Stones' "You Can't Always Get What You Want" in his funeral march. What a silly song for a funeral! Up to this day, my mom cannot tell if he was half-joking or not. So, of course, it wasn't played during the march. But I heard it playing somewhere recently, and I tried to catch the words this time. I can almost hear Mick Jagger singing now:

"You can't always get what you want / but if you try sometimes/ you just might find/ you just might find/ you get what you need…"

I suddenly felt that my father was just there, with my Lolo and my Tita, singing in heaven upon us all below.

Nina M. Santamaria, 27, is a professional interior designer. She writes and styles for several magazines and events. She is thankful that the Rolling Stones is still around, alive and kicking.

THEY SAID

Inept bankers

"It's time to go after some people here. The fact that we're perceived unable to enforce our laws makes these people bolder."

—Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Deputy Governor Alberto Reyes on the need to tighten rules in order to weed out incompetent people from owning or operating any bank

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Extortionist or oppressed?

IT is certainly distressing how an employee's small victory at the National Labor Relations Commission has been portrayed by at least three columnists of leading newspapers, the INQUIRER included, as part of an "extortion" scheme.

How can the labor arbiter's decision directing the reinstatement of Manuel Baviera be part of an "extortion" scheme? Standard Chartered Bank (SCB) may refuse to admit it, but its wide swath of "influence" failed to reach labor arbiter Pablo C. Espiritu Jr. who sided with the employee, rather than SCB.

So extensive is SCB's sphere of influence in the media that not only was Baviera mercilessly pilloried in the columns of leading newspapers, SCB's spin of the "extortion" angle continues to enjoy prominent space in the papers. And where was Baviera's side of the story? No one, not even the most enterprising of reporters made the barest attempt to get his side.

Really, if one is going to be very objective about it, the battle of Baviera against SCB can be likened to the hackneyed duel of David and Goliath. Baviera's labor case involves an employee dismissed by his employer because Baviera exposed a can of worms in SCB's illegal sale of unregistered securities.

SCB pats itself in the back that not one of the cases filed by Baviera before the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the Anti-Money Laundering Act Council and the prosecution offices has prospered so far. But these cases are still pending on appeal and have not been resolved by finality. But when the "mighty" employer SCB lost the labor case, it went to town labeling Baviera as an "extortionist."

An "extortionist" for winning a labor case? Something is definitely wrong when the public is made to perceive an employee who won a labor case as an "extortionist."

—**FRANCISCO I. CHAVEZ,**
counsel for Manuel Baviera,
Chavez Miranda Aseoche
Law Offices, 7/F Kalaw-Ledesma
Condominium, 117 Gamboa St.,
Legaspi Village, Makati City

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Missing feature

OF all the broadsheets in Metro Manila, I prefer and always buy the INQUIRER. I love and enjoy reading it especially the current news. Aside from this, my next interest is the section on the "Supreme Court Guidelines" which features the latest legal decisions of the highest court of the land. As a matter of fact, I have clippings and compilations of the "guidelines" for reference.

However, in the past few weeks, I noticed that the guidelines, without which my day is not complete, have become a seldom and irregular fare of the newspaper.

I would be happy to see the guidelines back daily, from Monday to Sunday.

—**TEDDY V. ODICTA,**
2nd lieutenant, PAF (ret.),
89-2B St., Airmen's Village,
Villamor Air Base, Pasay City

Good for most people

I READ with interest the column of Augusto F. Villalon in the Lifestyle section about billboards defacing the City of Manila. (PDI, 4/11/05) Upon turning the page, I saw a photo showing the breathtaking beauty of the young trees at Arroceros Forest Park. "The woods are lovely dark and deep," I was reminded of Robert Frost's immortal lines as well as Joyce Kilmer's "I think that I shall never see, a poem lovely as a tree."

Some of the trees at Arroceros Park are old—hundreds of years old—that they must have been witnesses to history, when the place was at one time the "Parian." But the young trees that gazed back at me from the photo were barely saplings. They were reaching out, begging to be given a chance to live.

I liked Villalon's column because he did concede that the teachers need their dormitory. There are always two sides (sometimes even more) to an issue. What saddens me is the fact that neither side (conservation groups and the city government) went to the negotiating table. Issues have become muddled and, I am told, have now reached the courts.

Lots of problems beset our country today. It seems almost unpatriotic to simply live within the confines of your domicile and not mind the battles that rage here and there, while your friends have given up the comfort of their homes to be involved.

My wish is for our leaders to think out their decisions well, especially when the repercussions are bound to be far-reaching. At all times going beyond themselves, as they consider what path indeed would benefit the most people. *Sana, sa lahat ng oras, gawin natin ang mas makabubuti sa mas nakararami.* (Would that at all times we do whatever is good for the greatest majority).

—**CYNTHIA ONGPIN VALDES,**
320 Tamarind Drive,
Ayala Alabang Village,
Muntinlupa City

Ocean 11

TWO professors of the UP 11 wrote separate letters, last April 6 and 16, relative to their participation or non-participation in the nine Senate committee hearings on VAT.

Prof. Emmanuel de Dios claims that he never attended any of the hearings. But in one hearing, someone, who was seated where his name card was formally placed, responded when his name was called.

Prof. Maria Socorro Gochoco-Bautista says she attended one hearing, but she was not asked any question.

Resource persons attend committee hearings because they are invited, or out of civic duty they voluntarily appear to give their views on a subject of legislation. Legislators welcome that and learn a lot from them.

The UP 11 had a paper on the fiscal problem which they caused to be widely published. A second one they filed on Good Friday. The members of the Senate ways and means committee charged with crafting the VAT bill had certainly wanted to hear their views because they are economics dons and experts.

It turns out that they never gave their opinions to the committee to support their paper. That is strange because all the resource persons who attended the nine committee hearings were heard and their views considered.

We wish the UP 11 were less parsimonious with their talents. No wonder, during the plenary debates on the VAT bill, three senators referred to them, perhaps facetiously, as the Ocean 11.

—**SEN. JOKER P. ARROYO**

A message of salvation

I WISH to clarify my position regarding the front-page news item, "Quake rumor rocks Philvolcs, sends wave of fear in Metro," which was published in the April 15 issue of the INQUIRER. According to that report, text messages attributed to me a prediction that an intensity 9 earthquake was going to hit Manila.

In all my interviews with media and talks at the healing center, I never mentioned the words "intensity 9." Someone, somewhere must have inserted the information in the frenzy of e-mails and text messages. And that diluted the essence of the message I wish to convey to all.

There were two opposite reactions to the text messages. One was anger—over the panic that was caused by a false alarm. The other was prayers of thanks to the Lord that He did not let His hand fall this time. There were many prayer vigils before April 14.

I stand by that message, excluding whatever details others have added, that what the Lord is trying to tell us is so simple. We have to pray and return to His fold, otherwise His hand will fall on us, the same message throughout the Old Testament. The message is to mankind, not just Filipinos.

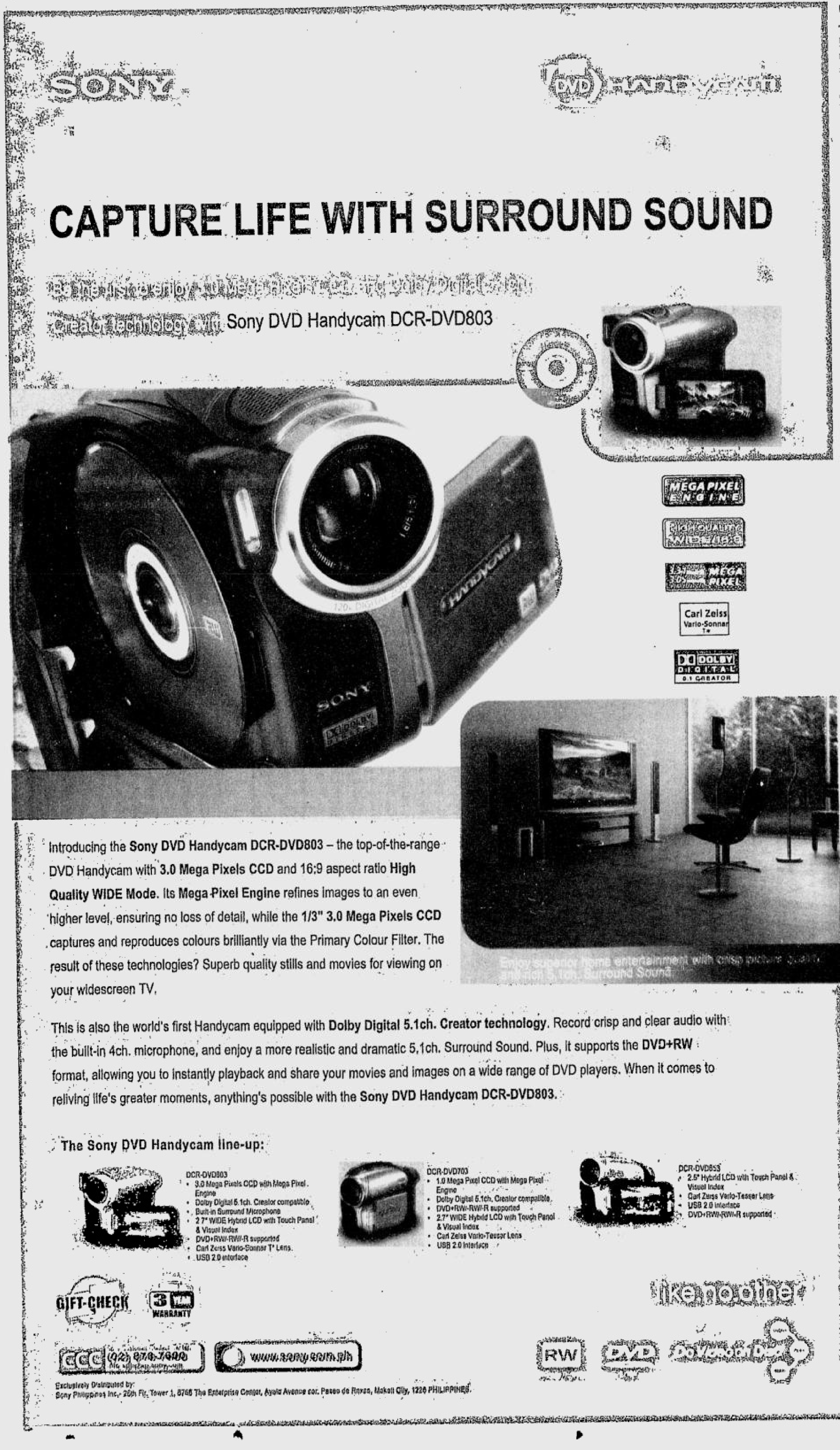
The essence of the prophecy is this—a series of massive earthquakes may hit the Philippines, no specific date, no specific intensity, sometime between 2005 and 2010. This is in tune with the recently revealed third secret of Fatima, which says that a terrible disaster may come up in the year 2005. Prayers and a return to the Lord can avert this prediction. It may happen now, tomorrow, later—or never at all if we change our ways.

I do not wish to cause panic, only to reveal what I believe is the message of the Lord, that He has appointed for me to say to the world. I stand by this, as His messenger in total surrender to His will.

The prophet Jonah complained to the Lord that he was made a fool when the prophecies he announced were never fulfilled. The Lord's reply was simple. He could not send punishment if people have repented. The people, in fear of Jonah's prophecy, changed their ways. The Lord sometimes resorts to the fear factor when He is desperate for our love. Other times, He resorts to the love factor. His mercy precedes His wrath.

In the same way, as in Jonah's time, it is never too late today for us to avert His hand with our prayers and our hearts. I will never be made a fool like Jonah because I know prayers will avert the message I convey, even if it does not come true. It is unfortunate that the panic of April 13 and 14, caused in part by the details added to the original message, has done nothing but make people ignore future warnings, until perhaps it is too late. Let me repeat the message: The Lord will bring disaster if we do not return to Him, no date, no time, no intensity. It is a message of salvation, not of perdition.

—**SR. RAQUEL REODICA, RVM,**
Mother Ignacia Healing Center,
857 Bagumbong Rd., Novaliches, QC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VISAYAS BUREAU
c/o Cebu Daily News
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ROUNDUP

P450M irrigation project launched

TOP Japanese and Philippine officials inaugurated recently the rehabilitation of Cagayan irrigation facilities in Iguig, Cagayan last April 21. Japanese Ambassador Ryuichiro Yamazaki and Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap inaugurated the P450 million project that would generate a stable supply of irrigation to farms in Cagayan and help the region's agriculture. In a press statement, the Japanese Embassy said the project would help 43,000 farmers, 8,500 families and communities in the region. Japan started funding the project in 1978 and continued the funding until 1991.

New roads for poor village

CITY OF CALAPAN—The provincial government has allotted P2 million for Barangay Sta. Rosa, Baco town for the concreting of its road, said Gov. Arnan Panaligan during his recent visit to the town under the Kapitolyo sa Barangay, a program pioneered by the late governor Bartolome Marasigan Sr. Panaligan said more than 400 people benefited from the medical mission, 100 from a dental mission and 300 from supplemental feeding in Barangays Sta. Rosa I, Sta. Rosa II, Burbuli, Mamangan I and Baras.

Madonna Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Drug rehab center planned

CITY OF CALAPAN—A drug rehabilitation center, requested by the league of mayors in the province from Gov. Arnan Panaligan, will be put up at the Philippine National Police headquarters here. The provincial government allotted P600,000 while each municipality will share P40,000, according to the league's president Mayor Norberto Mendoza.

Madonna Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Illegal fish ponds demolished

PRIETO DIAZ, Sorsogon—Mayor Benito Doma made good his threat to demolish illegal fish ponds constructed in the mangrove forest here. Doma led the demolition of a 4-hectare fish pond at Barangay San Isidro in this town on Monday. The mayor said he issued an executive order banning the construction of fish ponds within the mangrove forest. Among the groups that joined in the demolition were fishermen and farmers organizations, Tanggol-Kalikasan, Seamancor, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippine National Police, students and faculty members of the Sorsogon State College and barangay officials. Doma said it was a people power of sorts against the enemies of the environment.

Bobby Labalan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

SEN. RICHARD Gordon puts his arms on Irene Hamora and Jerry Abad, reporters of radio station dyER, and Louie Larosa, station manager, during awarding ceremonies at the Philippine Coast Guard headquarters in Puerto Princesa. PHOTO FROM COAST GUARD

DOJ chief says Esperat murder case not solved

COTABATO CITY—Justice Secretary Raul Gonzales yesterday said the murder of journalist Marlene Esperat is still not a closed case as police claimed.

In an interview with Radio Mindanao Network (RMN) here, Gonzales said authorities have identified five new suspects in the killing of Esperat.

Gonzales, however, declined to reveal the identities of the five new suspects but said the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has been informed of their identities.

He, however, also said the suspects' involvement in the March 24 murder of Esperat was still being verified.

He said the development only shows that the Esperat murder case "is not yet closed" contrary to earlier police statements.

Chief Supt. Antonio Billones, Central Mindanao police director, has said that the Esperat murder case was already solved with the arrest of the suspected gunman and three other suspects in separate operations.

Masterminds

Randy Grecia, one of the suspects, named Sumail Sekak, Central Mindanao agriculture director, and his wife Kunesa as masterminds.

Esperat had sued Sekak for alleged irregularities.

But another suspect, Army Sgt. Rowie Barua, cleared the Sekak couple, saying "they were just implicated because they (persons with vested interest) want them sacked from office so others can take over their posts."

Barua instead identified Osmeña Montañer, regional agriculture budget and finance director, and a senior office staffer, Estrella Sabay, as the masterminds.

Gonzales said Barua's affidavit linking Montañer and Sabay "do carry a lot of weight in the case."

"They are identified by way of public documents, but they are not (formally) accused yet. So, it's up to them to come out and clear their names by helping us solve the crime," said Gonzales.

Montañer had denied involvement in the Esperat murder case. "God knows I cannot do that to her (Esperat)," he said.

Montañer admitted that Esperat had filed graft charges against him and other regional agriculture officials "but all these have been dismissed in court."

Innocence

"For almost a decade that the case had been pending in court, we have had good relations with her. All of us in the DA office talked to her and treated her well. With all honesty and candor, I can say before God that I am innocent. God knows that I cannot do this to her," Montañer said.

He said that statements linking him to Esperat's death were unfair and irresponsible.

"That's baseless. It saddened my family, relatives and friends," he said.

Montañer also urged officials to be more circumspect because "it will not only safeguard human rights but also avoid undue confusion" in the investigation.

"My entire family and relatives, including some close friends were surprised at my alleged involvement," Montañer said. *Charlie Señase and Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Ex-gov cleared of detention rap

LAOAG CITY—Acquitting former Ilocos Norte Rep. Rodolfo Fariñas of an arbitrary detention charge, the Court of Appeals has reversed itself and set aside two lower court decisions which found Fariñas guilty of locking up his former driver inside the provincial capitol vault in 1989.

In an amended decision dated April 14, the appellate court set aside its own decision on Sept. 27, 2004 upholding Fariñas' conviction by the metropolitan trial court and regional trial court, both of Quezon City.

The two lower courts earlier found the former lawmaker guilty of arbitrary detention in their decisions dated April 10, 2002 and Jan. 16, 2003, respectively.

Fariñas, who was sentenced to six months in prison, however, appealed the decisions.

In a 20-page decision penned by Associate Justice Martin Villarama, the CA set aside its original findings and acquitted Fariñas of the charge due to reasonable doubt.

"The basis of acquittal (reasonable doubt) simply means that the evidence (of the prosecution) was not sufficient to sustain and prove the alleged guilt of the accused with moral certainty," Villarama said.

Associate Justices Edgardo Sundiam and Japar Dimaampao concurred with Villarama.

"Reasonable doubt means not a single iota of doubt remains present in the mind of a reasonable and unprejudiced man that a person is guilty of a crime," Villarama said in his decision.

"In instances where doubt exists, even if only a shred, the court must and should set the accused free."

Villarama added: "It matters not that the accused in this case is a prominent public official who may have been cast by media—fairly or unfairly—in the mold of a traditional politician so to speak. Still, the most vital essence of the democratic way of life is the protection of the bedrock guarantees extended by the Constitution to all persons regardless of rank." *Cristina Arzadon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Coast Guard cites 2 radio reporters

TWO radio reporters and the studio manager of a Palawan radio station were honored by the Philippine Coast Guard for helping save the lives of four fishermen from Zambales who were reported missing early this month.

Reporters Irene Hamora and Jerry Abad and station manager Louie Larosa of radio station dyER were presented special citations by Sen. Richard Gordon, guest of honor during the awarding rites.

The three were cited for helping in the successful rescue of fishermen Pedro Pialan Jr., Jimmy Francis, Zaldy Cacatani and Ronald Mercado.

On April 9, Hamora and Abad spotted the fishermen's boat while on board an Islander aircraft. The two filed a report immediately which was aired by dyER and dzRH, leading to the successful rescue operation by the Coast Guard.

Other honorees were Cmdr. Aaron Reconquista, pilot of the Islander plane, Ensigns Raymund Santos and Cesar Francisco and Capt. Lino Dabi of the Palawan Coast Guard.

Puerto Princesa Mayor Edward Hagedorn said the timely reporting of Hamora and Abad enabled the Coast Guard based in the city to launch the rescue operation.

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A li'l school by the sea survives

By Hazel P. Villa
Barbaza, Antique

SANDWICHED between the beach and the highway leading to the scenic town of Barbaza in Antique is a tiny school that could be any playful tyke's paradise.

Its backyard is the inviting beach and surrounding the playground are shady trees and greenery of the seaside variety. Chickens, dogs, and cats roam, ready to play with pupils.

You'd expect schoolchildren to be immersed in the childhood joys of playing truant in an unfenced school of only about 500 square meters, but the pupils here are looking forward daily to "Math Hataw" to learn their multiplication table while doing early morning exercise routines, and to holding a computer mouse properly via a polished object called the "Sorcerer's Stone" instead of the real one.

Flashcards serve as icons and the teacher is the "Central Processing Unit."

With its three teachers and 108 pupils from Kinder to Grade 6, this school in the tiny coastal village of Bahoyan-Yapo is now the show window of the ideal multigrade school—receiving a steady stream of accolades and visitors from all over the Philippines, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the Southeast Asian Ministries Education Organization.

For all its deceptively bucolic appearance, the Bahoyan-Yapo Multigrade School has fantastically slain the Goliaths of challenges attacking poverty-stricken barangay schools in the country.

"They (the educators) just can't believe that this tiny school of ours could achieve well in the tests," said Marilou Juanitas, 46, the head schoolteacher, and native of Bahoyan-Yapo, who was recently promoted to principal for her sacrifices and achievements.

Starting from zero

In 1996, when Juanitas returned to her hometown as a teacher, the dilapidated school with indifferent students had no passers in the National Elementary Achievement Test (NEAT).

It had just opened Grade 5 with 22 students and Grade 6 with 21 students. To top it all, the enrollees were out-of-school youths, aged 16 to 21 years old, who could barely read and had no motivation at all in going to school.

Fresh out of a teaching stint in a more comfortable private school in the town of Culasi, Juanitas was worried about keeping the students in school. With only three of them teaching Grades 1 to 6, she had to prepare an incredible 16 lesson plans a night and she often finishes them at 1 a.m.

She persevered with the help of five students who were the only readers in the Grades 5 and 6 classes. Using peer tutoring, the five helped the others learn how to read.

A PUPIL of the Bahoyan-Yapo Multigrade School resists the call for a swim as she studies in one of the small campus' study areas prior to the National Achievement Test. HAZEL VILLA/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

"In 1997, I asked the parents of the slow-reading students to help their children read with comprehension," said Juanitas, who herself studied in Bahoyan-Yapo when it had classes up to Grade 4.

Reading classes among the sons and daughters of fishermen, farmers and the *sacada* (laborers) were intensive and the following school year of 1997-98, the school had a passing percentage of 61 percent in the NEAT and ranked second out of four selected schools in Barbaza—and the only multigrade school at that.

From 1997 to 2001, Bahoyan-Yapo's NEAT passing average went up, and though they never reached 100 percent, it was a major achievement for the school that was given up for failure.

In 2003, the school got a 60.76-percent score in the Antique Division Achievement Test. It also ranked first out of 32 Antique schools that took the National Sample-Based Assessment Test of the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) in the same year, with 55.74 percent.

This little school by the sea basically relied on Juanitas' unique teaching strategies and community esprit de corps and enthusiasm in preparing for a better future for their children.

International help

Antique is one of 23 beneficiaries of the TEEP of the Department of Education, World Bank and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

The Bahoyan-Yapo Multigrade School falls under schools selected for assistance in the province. Juanitas and her teachers have participated in the TEEP's In-Service Training, while the pupils received help in the form of free school supplies and learning materials.

While thankful for the help, Juanitas said it was mostly the parents' cooperation, teachers' sacrifice and students' dogged determination to learn that made things happen for them.

Juanitas is a stickler for achieving subject competency. She chalked up the school's academic success to overtime work in meeting subject objectives where, after dismissal, pupils go to the principal for more lessons.

Even Saturdays and Sundays are not spared, starting June when all grade levels return to school for a few hours to review. She herself prepares the review materials, culled from previous achievement tests and the end-chapters of books.

"Since the grade levels are mixed, the pupils hear the other grades' review lessons. This is useful because some questions for Grades 3 and 4 can sometimes be found in Grades 5 and 6," said Juanitas.

She said she went to the homes of students who had been absent from reviews, and talked to them and their parents until they returned to classes.

She shared three of the school's best practices that were peculiar to their own needs. Though the practices remained an ideal in other schools, Bahoyan-Yapo was committed to standing by the *purok* group study, peer teaching and the pupil government.

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Mindanao women want fewer, but get more, kids

DAVAO CITY—While a large number of women in Mindanao want to have only two children, they end up having more because they lack knowledge about proper family planning.

This was what the National Statistics Office (NSO) reported in the National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), which it conducted with the US-based survey agency ORC Macro.

The survey, which was nationwide in scope, was conducted in 2003 yet but the results were only made available recently.

In a presentation here last week, the NSO said about 9.2 percent of women in Mindanao want proper birth spacing while 9.5 percent said they wanted to limit the number of their children.

It was not specified how many women in Mindanao were included in the survey but nationwide, the respondents totaled 14,000 women of reproductive age.

Of the regions in Mindanao, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) had the highest percentage of unmet women's needs, or those that want to have lesser children but end up having more.

Mia Ventura, deputy executive director of the Population Commission (PopCom), said there was a need for government to intensify efforts to reach women in remote areas, such as the ARMM and Caraga, to make them aware about proper family planning and satisfy their needs for a limited number of children.

"There should be interpersonal communication with women in places like ARMM and Caraga such as the door-to-door Ligtas Buntis campaign," she said.

Ventura said at least 41 of 79 governors in Mindanao have expressed their desire to help in raising the awareness of those in rural areas about family planning.

In contrast, the survey found out that women who have ready access to information about family planning have satisfied their needs and they use planning methods to limit the number of their children.

Of the respondents in urban areas like Davao City, about 41.6 percent use modern methods, while 17.7 percent still resort to the traditional methods.

Birth control pill remains the popular modern family planning method used by women in urban areas of Mindanao.

Maduh Damsani, PopCom Southern Mindanao regional director, said the region should shift to more modern methods of family planning such as IUD and vasectomy to ensure the success of the campaign on birth control. *Joselle Badilla, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

PEACE CARROT DANGLED

Palm plantation planned in ex-reb camp

By Germelina Lacorte and Dennis Jay Santos
PDI Mindanao Bureau

DAVAO CITY—The government is planning to convert the former rebel stronghold of Camp Abubakar for a 10,000-hectare oil palm plantation to benefit members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) even before a peace agreement is signed with the rebel group.

Jesus Dureza, of the Mindanao Economic Development Council (Medco), said the project was agreed upon in the sidelights of the recent informal senior officials' meeting of the four-country East Asean Growth Area (Eaga) held in Kota Kinabalu the previous week.

The project is set to be presented in the plenary of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (Asean) summit in December, to form part of the talking points of the President, according to Merly Cruz, regional director of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

Cruz said Malaysia, which has already a well-developed palm oil industry, has committed to supply the seeds for the project, which would be funded by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC).

Investment

The project will form part of the government's move to strengthen the peace and development agenda in Mindanao, by improving the economic lives of former rebels and strengthening the region's security, a vital factor in drawing in investments.

"Unlike the former peace agreement (with the Moro National Liberation Front), when development funds only poured in after the peace pact was signed, the government is set to start development on the ground even before the peace agreement with the MILF," Dureza said.

The project will heavily involve the Bangsamoro Development Authority (BDA), which is the development arm of the MILF.

Dureza said the government of Japan has already expressed initial interest over the project.

Camp Abubakar in Maguindanao was the former stronghold of the MILF before it was taken over by government forces at the height of the all-out-war declared by then President Joseph Estrada in 2000.

Now that it is already in government hands, it will be used again to uplift the conditions of the rebels to encourage them to return to the folds of the law, said Dureza.

Dureza said the initial agreement reached by the four-country Eaga was for the whole of Borneo to propagate oil palm plantation and then expand it in Mindanao.

"Malaysia has developed its palm oil industry as its solution to poverty," Dureza said. "What worked for them may also work for us."

He said Malaysia has agreed to develop an industrial estate in Lahad Datu in Sabah, where it will put up a palm oil refinery and host the downstream industries of palm oil. Aside from palm oil, the four countries in the Eaga have also agreed to develop their *halal* poultry industry, seaweed and business development services together and make these industries more competitive in the world market.

Ship firms decry new customs order

A GROUP of executives of shipping lines based in Cebu City yesterday asked the customs bureau to recall an order barring shipping companies from transporting imported used vehicles, saying the order appeared to be ignorant of the nature of the shipping industry.

Maximino Cruz, general manager of the Association of International Shipping Lines, said in a press statement that the Bureau of Customs order would have serious negative effects on the shipping industry.

The order was based on Republic Act 8506 which bans right hand drive vehicles.

But Cruz said the order smacks of ignorance.

Cruz said the law on importation and use of RHDs does not apply to the shipping companies because they are not the ones who use or import the RHDs.

"They (the shipping lines) are not importers of these shipments but mainly performing their role as common carriers obligated to transport goods . . .," he said.

He said by sheer ignorance, the customs order "could interrupt the cross-border flow of international trade because it will undermine international shipping practices."

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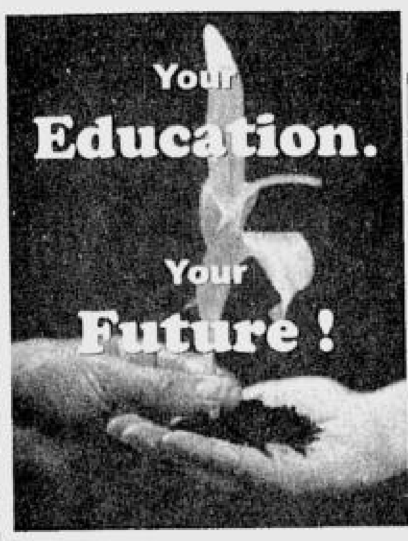

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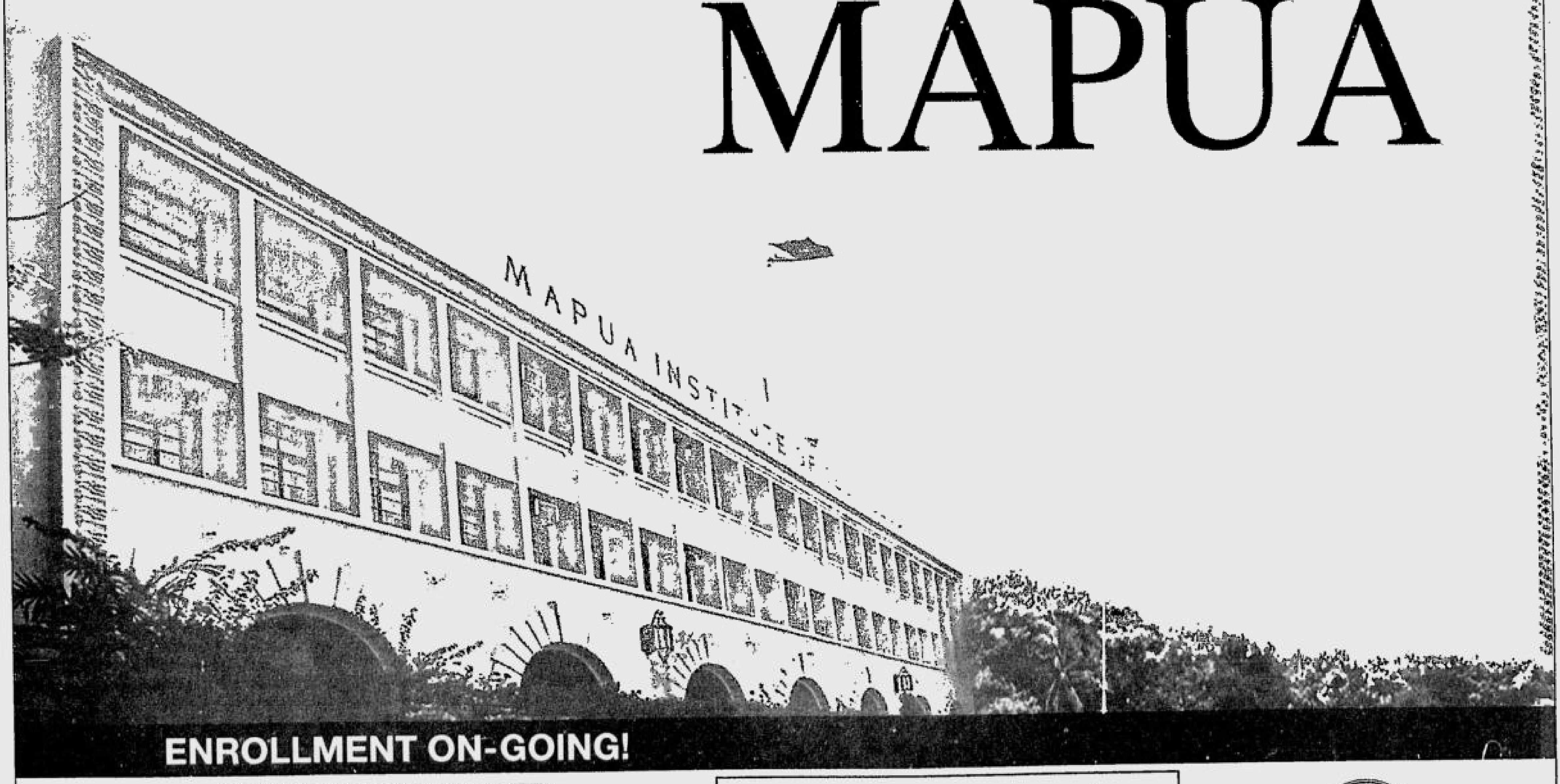

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Higher power rates OKd

From page A1

Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) overseeing Napocor's privatization, said the rate increase was likely to cut Napocor's net loss this year to P31 billion from an earlier estimate of P34 billion.

Other rate adjustments

On top of the approved final rate hike for Napocor, the ERC also approved yesterday the state firm's application to adjust its rates to recover its cost fluctuations.

For Napocor's generation recovery adjustment mechanism (GRAM), the ERC allowed the state firm to recover 30.48 centavos per kWh in Luzon, 47.34 centavos per kWh in the Visayas and 47.67 per kWh in Mindanao.

The average GRAM-related adjustment for the whole country is pegged at 41.83 centavos per kWh.

Another cost-recovery mechanism that the ERC approved yesterday was Napocor's incremental currency exchange rate adjustment (Icera).

Under the Icera, the ERC allowed Napocor to recover 18.21 centavos per kWh in Luzon. The state firm, however, would have to reduce its rates in the Visayas and Mindanao grids by 9.67 centavos per kWh and 0.72 centavos per kWh, respectively.

The quarterly GRAM allows Napocor to recover cost fluctuations of power purchased from independent power producers.

The Icera is a quarterly rate adjustment mechanism that allows Napocor to reflect foreign exchange fluctuations in its rates.

Time-of-use pricing

The ERC also ordered the mandatory adoption of the time-of-use (TOU) pricing scheme for distribution utilities and electric cooperatives.

Under the TOU pricing scheme, electricity rates will be higher during peak hours and lower during off-peak hours, usually between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. and during Sundays.

"The adoption of TOU pricing approximates the true cost of electricity at different times of the day. When fully implemented at the retail level, this will allow end-users the option to use electricity during off-peak hours when electricity is less costly," Lotilla said.

"Consumers are encouraged to conduct their power-intensive activities from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. from Monday to Saturday," he said.

Scott Wilson, executive director of investment research at UBS in Singapore, said the government had to strike a difficult balance between raising power rates and taxes while avoiding a public backlash over rising fuel costs.

"We view it as modestly positive," he said.

Lower operating deficit

"The ERC's decision will inspire some confidence in the market that at least some of the operating deficit of Napocor will be filled. That lowers borrowing costs for Napocor and reduces the consolidated budget deficit of the government," Wilson said.

Bernardo said Napocor had a financing deficit of around $700 million before the rate hike was granted.

With the approval, the figure should go down to $500 million, he said.

But the government may still need to resort to more borrowings to finance that $500 million, he said.

Napocor had warned that its debts could rise by nearly 50 percent to $15.9 billion in the next two years if its rate rise request was not granted and if it failed to sell its assets.

The firm had outstanding debts of $10.8 billion in 2004.

Delayed privatization

Napocor's huge debts and operating losses have delayed its privatization and hurt government efforts to cut a fiscal shortfall seen hitting about P180 billion this year, or 3.4 percent of gross domestic product, from P186.1 billion, or 3.9 percent of GDP, in 2004.

The government, which alone has $69 billion in debts, said last year it would assume P200 billion of Napocor's debt to help speed up the sale to private investors of its power plants and transmission facilities.

The ERC said the approved final rate hike of P1.04 per kWh was well below the P187 per kWh, or 77 percent increase, that Napocor had petitioned for in June 2004.

Albano said the ERC was not satisfied with the evidence presented by Napocor.

Some of the state firm's internal valuations of its assets also fell short of the state regulator's expectations, he said.

"While it is always difficult to make a decision to increase electricity rates, the public will be assured that only those costs fully supported by the evidence presented during the many days of hearings will be passed on to customers," he said.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla, who was PSALM president when Napocor petitioned for the rate increase, said the state power firm should just accept the ERC decision.

He directed all state-run power-related agencies to "mitigate the impact of the new rates on consumers."

To cushion impact

"The President has instructed all agencies of government to cushion the impact of any price adjustment, particularly on the poor," he said in a statement.

He noted that lifeline customers, or those using less than 100 kWh of electricity a month, would continue to enjoy discounts of up to 50 percent on their consumption.

All residential consumers will also continue to benefit from the 30-centavo-per-kWh mandatory rate reduction under RA 9136, or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001.

With a report from Reuters

CELEBRATION. Clarence (left) and Carl Aguirre with mother Arlene. AP

'Miracle' Aguirre twins turn 3

From page A1

children their own age and have reached a milestone any toddler—and any parent—can be proud of: They've started saying "Thank you."

Not that either said much at their party at Blythedale Children's Hospital in Valhalla, where the brothers get therapy in motor skills, language and nutrition.

When friends, teachers, doctors and therapists sang "Happy Birthday," Carl hid his face in his mother's chest. Clarence was much more outgoing, posing for photographs, applauding and dumping a cake-filled paper plate onto the floor.

'Hi' and 'bye'

"They're really sweet, lighthearted kids," said Julie Knitter, director of occupational therapy at Blythedale. "They're delayed for their age, always have been, but they are making headway in each skill area."

The boys are not walking yet, but they can sit without support, pull themselves up to standing positions and even ride tricycles with help. Their speech is still a concern, with no full sentences, but they understand much more than they say, according to their pediatrician, Dr. Robert Marion.

"You tell Carl, 'Touch your toes,' and he touches his toes," the doctor said.

Among the words and phrases they know are "hi," "bye" and "thank you," he said.

Getting to know you

Knitter said the brothers, who could not see each other for their first 2-1/2 years, have shown increasing interest in each other since the separation.

"At first, they didn't know much about each other, but now they show more interest in each other than in anyone else," she said. "If one of them is mad, the other thinks that's really funny."

The boys were separated at the Children's Hospital at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx, where surgeons used an innovative gradual approach to separate them with four operations over 10 months. The last surgery was Aug. 4.

Carl and Clarence must go back for reconstruction of their skulls, but the rehabilitation process has been going so well that doctors are reluctant to interrupt it for a lengthy hospital stay.

A miracle

Marion said the boys' progress "has been amazing to watch."

"I opened the door and here's Carl coming directly at me on a tricycle. I'm thinking, 'This is a miracle'," he said.

"If these boys had not come to us when they did, they were going to die."

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Slain policeman not just hero, but peace activist

From page A1

Baicon Macaraya, coordinator of the Bangsamoro Youth-Ranao Center for Peace and Development, said that unknown to many, Axciel was an active peace worker.

Axciel had been involved in peace efforts in Lanao del Sur through community organizing and rehabilitation as early as 1998 while also performing his duties as a policeman.

Sense of volunteerism

"He had this sense of volunteerism. He was simply happy to be of help," Macaraya said.

At the height of the Estrada administration's war against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2000, Axciel saw action not as a policeman but as volunteer in relief efforts involving Macaraya's group.

"In fact, there was a time that we asked his superiors to detail him with us because he was really a big help," Macaraya recalled.

Spending his own money

In 2001, Axciel was officially detailed with the Bangsamoro Youth as a volunteer. He became involved in various rehabilitation and peace efforts, including rehabilitation of displaced residents of Kapatagan, Lanao del Sur and Sapad in Matanog, Maguindanao.

Macaraya said Axciel would even spend his own money to mobilize the services of other volunteers.

In 2002, Axciel was recalled to his regular police duties, according to Macaraya, but he still found time for peace efforts.

"On Saturdays and Sundays, or even during breaktime, he would drop by our office and would ask what he could possibly do. It seems that for him, his work was never a barrier. He always had time to volunteer," she said.

A quiet hero

He even found time to organize the out-of-school youth in the barangay where he lived.

Macaraya remembers Axciel as the "silent but the surprise jester type."

"There is a sense in his personality. Very thoughtful, charming and caring," she said.

Macaraya said Axciel would always send text messages to his mother telling her to take care of his siblings.

She said the slain policeman would also tell his mother to always remind his siblings to pray.

Axciel was a devoted Muslim who prayed five times a day.

Tribute to an officer

When Macaraya heard that Axciel had been killed in the rescue operation, she said she instantly knew that it was his willingness to help others that cost him his life.

"[He was] willing to give his life for others, even non-Muslims. Remember that the hostages were mostly Christian. That was the real him. He would not let anybody down. If worst comes to worst, he was willing to sacrifice his life," Macaraya said in tears.

Courting Maranaw girl

Ashnie Dimalna, a 20-year-old Maranaw girl, whom Axciel was courting, said he was a kind man and that everybody simply loved him.

"I loved him as a friend," she said.

SPO2 Talib Ampatua, chief investigator of the Marawi City police, described Axciel as a very dedicated policeman.

"Always on time, and [he] did not complain," he said.

PO3 Sonny Diangka, in charge of the city detention center, pointed to the Philippine flag flying at half-mast outside the police station and said: "That signifies our mourning for the death of a valiant officer."

InqBox

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Dexter Aligan
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Cynthia Nono
Metro North 1

SILVER

Dexter Aligan
Metro West 1

EPCI Bank Branch Level

DIAMOND

Century Park-Adriatico
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Division Level

Annie Ngo
Senior Vice President
Metro West Division

Most Number of Case Counts Category

Financial Sales Executives Level

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Metro West 3

GOLD

Jonel Cecilio
Metro West 2

SILVER

Arnold Manapat
Metro North 1

Area Managers Level

DIAMOND

Dexter Aligan
Metro West 1

GOLD

Cynthia Nono
Metro North 1

SILVER

Chrysler Batucan
Luzon South

EPCI Bank Branch Level

DIAMOND

Century Park -Adriatico
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Fans there for Nora Aunor

From page A1

from her arrest at Los Angeles International Airport on March 30 for alleged possession of eight grams of methamphetamine hydrochloride, or shabu.

California law

The actress, whose real name is Nora Cabaltera Villamayor, was arrested when airport screeners stopped her on her way to Oakland.

In the courtroom, Aunor was flanked by her lawyers, Filipina Claire Espina and her partner Sherwin Edelberg of the law offices of Edelberg & Espina.

Under California law, the penalty for such offense is from zero time to 18 months in jail, Edelberg said.

If the case goes to trial, it could last from five to 10 days, Edelberg said.

Aunor is free on bail.

Edelberg said Aunor only paid 10 percent, or $1,000, of the bail, which was set at $10,000.

A celebrity

Outside the courtroom, people entering or leaving the building—white, black, Asian, Latino—wondered what the stir was all about.

"What's going on?" and "Who's the celebrity in there?" they asked.

"A Filipina superstar is inside the building," they were told.

Aunor's fans arrived at the courthouse as early as 7:30 a.m. for the 8:30 a.m. arraignment. They came from San Francisco, Arizona, Reno, Daly City, San Diego and San Jose.

They arrived in full force with posters, banners and T-shirts to show their support for their idol.

One of those who came was Michael Roldan, who said he had been a fan of Aunor since he was in the sixth grade.

Not a boy friend

He stood out in his white tee-shirt emblazoned with "Number One Rated Actress"—or NORA for short.

Facing the media after her arraignment, Aunor was asked if her reputed boyfriend John Rendez was with her when she came to Los Angeles.

Speaking in Tagalog, she replied: "John Rendez is just my friend. He is not my boyfriend. He has his own family now. If it's all right with you, let us not drag him into this. Let's leave him in peace. Anyway, he is not here. He was not with me at the airport."

Aunor said that she had received comfort and strength from the support of her family, friends, fans, and most of all, from her children, Lotlot and Ian de Leon.

THE MEDIA importance of Nora Aunor in the Philippines is evident in the presence of correspondents from the country's two TV networks, GMA 7 and ABS-CBN. Other mediamen are from AP, Fox News and local LA paper and Fil-Ams.

RUBEN V. NEPALES/LA PDI CORRESPONDENT

"Lotlot already called me and she said she is supporting me," she said.

Superstar's shortcomings

She added: "I know what my shortcomings are to them and I am thankful to them and to all of the people who are supporting me."

"I would like to thank all my fellow Filipinos here in the States and in the Philippines who are supporting me," she said.

"Thank you for all your e-mail and the letters you sent me, not only my fans, my lawyers who are always taking care of me, and my friends. I would also like to thank the reporters, the producers, the people in the industry who are supporting me. I will never forget your support."

But Aunor had one appeal.

"My only request to you is let us not tear down each other and let us show that we are together and love each other. Let us start here in America."

Asked if she has faith in the American judicial system, Aunor said: "Let us trust in the system and in all the people."

Show must go on

Aunor came to the United States for a series of concerts.

Asked if her concerts would push through, Aunor answered in the affirmative.

She stressed: "It is business as usual."

Aunor is scheduled to perform in a concert series titled, "Together Again," with Tirso Cruz III and Christopher de Leon.

The series, which starts on April 30 at the El Dorado Convention Center in Reno, includes shows in Los Angeles (May 6), Las Vegas (May 7), New Jersey (May 14) and Virginia Beach (May 15).

Aunor's immigration lawyer, Lourdes Santos Tancinco from San Francisco, and her manager, Nori Sayo, from the Philippines, were also with the popular singer-actress.

Television and print media, from the AP to GMA 7 and ABS-CBN, covered the hearing.

Fan clubs

Some of the fan clubs represented were NORA, Nora Aunor Limited, Federation of Nora Aunor Followers and Icon.

The first batch of supporters which came was curiously all-male, save for one female Noranian, who came all the way from Arizona.

The Noranians enjoyed the attention of the media, which eventually also included a FOX News TV camera man, a photographer from the local paper, Daily Breeze, which first reported Nora's arrest, and a sprinkling of Fil-Am reporters and photographers.

In a black suit, Aunor was a picture of confidence and charm.

Josie Visitacion, president of the Nora Aunor Limited fan club, displayed posters with messages like "We Love Ate Guy."

The courthouse was in a modern, hi-tech building of glass and concrete.

Worried about pants

Inside the courtroom, Aunor worried about her pants which she was not able to iron. She also said she had initially dyed her hair blonde but because of her brown complexion, she had to change her hair color back to black with red highlights for the court appearance.

The singer-actress wore a boyish haircut.

She clung to her immigration lawyer, Tancinco, like a security blanket.

Seated in front of the gallery, Aunor exchanged pleasantries with her defense lawyers.

Laughter in the courtroom

Edelberg, her silver-haired American lawyer, asked her if she needed a smoke or if she was relaxed enough. Aunor said she was comfortable and relaxed.

She was so relaxed that she made an unprintable comment in feisty, half-joking Filipino when a tattooed lady snapped at Tancinco for putting her attaché case in the way as the woman walked to her seat in the gallery.

Roomful of tattooed guys

When Edelberg leaned over to tell a joke, Aunor laughed so hard that she was almost in tears. Asked what the joke was about, she said with a straight face: "I couldn't understand so I just laughed."

Fans of La Aunor came over to whisper to their idol and give her a hug and a buzz on the cheek.

Nora's case, among several in the court's schedule, was called first.

There were other drug cases to be heard and the courtroom was filled with tattooed guys with shaved heads who wore loose, baggy pants.

Applause

Coming out to face the media, La Aunor was besieged by the jostling reporters and paparazzi.

Hearing what she thought was an objectionable comment from one of the photographers, she walked to the guy to set him straight, still smiling.

The Noranians positioned themselves behind their idol, holding up adoring posters and clapping at some of Nora's replies, as if she were giving a concert by the courthouse.

With AP

Medical 'apocalypse' looms

From page A1

can get nursing jobs in Europe, the United States or even the Middle East, to work in "dirty" jobs, like helping doctors deliver babies, inject sedatives and treat ailing tots.

Castro estimates that 2,000 doctors leave the country each year, while about 1,000 graduate from medical schools.

Even though they cannot practice medicine abroad, the specialists do not mind the downgrade as they still earn around $8,000 a month, 16 times the pay of doctors at government hospitals in the Philippines.

More than one million people are expected to migrate or seek temporary work outside the country this year, according to Labor Secretary Patricia Santo Tomas.

First wave

Of the 8 million expatriates, some 3 million are now permanent residents of the United States and other points west.

"You cannot prevent every citizen of the country from looking for greener pastures," Castro says.

In the early 1970s amid the oil crisis, the first wave of migrant workers were construction workers who fed the building boom of the oil-soaked Mideast kingdoms, joined by seamen manning the world's merchant marine fleet.

Domestic workers soon followed to run the homes of the upwardly mobile families mostly of newly industrializing East Asia, the Middle East and western Europe. Then entertainers opened up a new front in Japan.

Sailors still make up a big part of the annual deployments, but the government says the new growth areas are service-related sectors—hospitals, nursing homes for the elderly, or hotel or tourism-related jobs anywhere from Israel to the farthest reaches of the Caribbean.

Filipinos are everywhere

Filipino workers are found in 120 countries, even in areas where they are banned, such as Iraq.

The Philippines is second only to Mexico in terms of labor deployments, and third after India and Mexico in terms of foreign remittances.

On average, Filipinos work abroad for 15 years before returning home.

"We're seeing less and less of construction workers and well, fewer domestic helpers. The move is toward more technical and professional jobs," Santo Tomas says.

The biggest host country remains Saudi Arabia, but there is "significant movement to Asia and the Pacific," with Australia opening up, Japan about to sign an economic partnership agreement with the Philippines, and Hong Kong about to throw open its Disneyland.

Human resource global

Even China asked for English teachers, though the Philippines thumbed its nose because Beijing's $200 a month offer was on par with the pay of public school teachers here, Santo Tomas adds.

She says labor migration is a natural progression of globalization and should not be seen as a reflection of the government's failure to provide a better life for many of its citizens.

"Human resource is now a global resource, the way capital is regarded as a global resource," she says. "If the capital of the more developed economies move, why shouldn't the human resource of developing countries?"

The combined overseas work force and migrant population of 8 million sent $8.5 billion to their relatives back home last year, equivalent to 10 percent of the gross domestic product, half the national budget, and 22 percent of merchandise exports.

With the additional demand this year, remittances should rise by at least 6 percent to $9 billion, the central bank says.

Success stories

The ready cash is a heady fuel for the consumption-led growth of an economy that creates only about a million jobs a year, where the unemployment rate stood at 11.3 percent and where the population is growing by nearly 2.4 million every year.

The diaspora does not lack for success stories.

Manuel Pangilinan left the country for Hong Kong in the mid-1970s to set up an investment firm, First Pacific Co. Ltd., now listed in the New York Stock Exchange. Its portfolio includes the world's largest noodle maker and the Philippines' dominant telecommunications firm.

He relocated back to the Philippines a few years ago to take management control of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. while continuing to run First Pacific.

"As a nation, we just do not create enough jobs every year," he told an audience of US-based Filipinos in January.

"Migration will be with us for the long term."

Nothing like it

Santo Tomas, who has herself worked across the globe as a United Nations consultant before accepting a Cabinet post that pays less than $1,000 a month, says the money sent back home is fueling a construction boom that is transforming the Philippine countryside and injecting much-needed funds to an educational system groaning under the weight of an exploding population.

"There is nowhere in the world that you have this kind of orderly migration for contract workers and that is why people keep coming to us to take a look at our system," she says.

She still bristles at the memory of a Canadian of Asian origin who asked her during a foreign trip if there was something in the genetic makeup of Filipinos that made them predisposed to become domestic workers.

"For a long time in the Philippines our amahs (maids) were Chinese. I don't think it's a genetic predisposition. I thought it was a particular period of the history of the Chinese people when they didn't have employment available locally," she said.

Demand for caregivers

"Given another generation we will be immensely better off."

With a high proficiency in English, the Philippines' labor exports are limited only by the number of skilled workers that its schools can churn out.

With the exploding demand for caregivers, however, the country faces a possible hollowing out in some key areas.

Two government hospitals on Negros island have threatened to shut down unless Congress raises the salaries of government doctors, Castro adds.

AFP

Sexologist's protest brings condoms . . .

From page A1

tion of their use, even to protect against AIDS.

Giuseppe Cirillo said he was on St. Peter's Square to "ask the new Pope Benedict XVI to relax the Church's policy and for him to tell people that condoms are medicine."

The 52-year-old Cirillo has his own brand of condoms, with the packet bearing a photo of him smiling, holding a book and pointing a finger at the sky.

Promotional offer

"For now, I am giving them away as a promotional offer, but I plan eventually to sell them for 50 euro cents each," he said, posing for photographers with a handful of his wares at the top of Via della Conciliazione, the broad avenue that leads into the square.

Cirillo seemed not to be bothering police on patrol in the area, while passersby expressed their appreciation for his gesture.

"It is very good, very important to do that," said Giuseppe, a 65-year-old retired soldier.

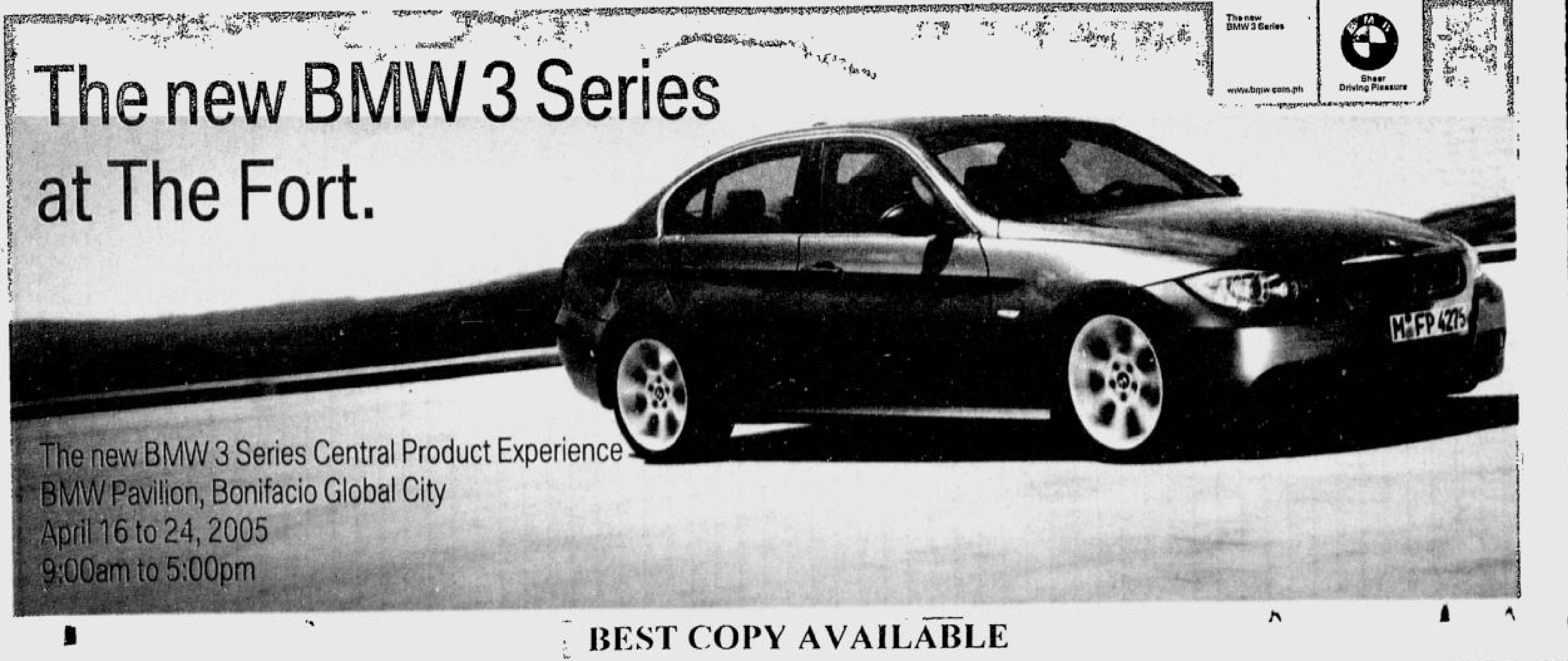
No, thank you

Spotting a priest passing by in his cassock, Cirillo quickly offered him a condom. "No, no. No thank you," said the priest.

Cirillo retorted: "You know, I have seen priests in Africa handing them out."

The late Pope John Paul II regularly preached sexual abstinence and marital fidelity as the only appropriate way to guard against AIDS. His successor is equally conservative.

AFP



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Raps poised vs Bicutan jail officials

By Norman Bordadora

WITH an incompetent warden overseeing a staff of demoralized watchmen and an ill-equipped prison, the Metro Manila District Jail in Bicutan, Taguig City was already a house in ruin, holding a group of determined inmates itching to escape at the first chance.

These, in a nutshell, were the findings of the inter-agency fact-finding team formed by Interior and Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes more than a month after Abu Sayyaf Group leaders Alhamsar Limbong and Galib Andang, with 13 others, wrested control of the first floor of the jail following a botched escape try. The group had been detained on charges of kidnapping for ransom, among others.

The probe team recommended the filing of administrative charges against warden Jail Supt. Romeo Elisan, deputy warden Jail Chief Insp. Jaime Aquino for alleged gross neglect of duty, inefficiency and incompetence for their failure to prevent the jail break attempt, despite having received intelligence information on the matter as early as December 2004.

The report went on to say that interviews with jail guards and inmates at the "special intensive care area" (Sica) where the suspects were detained showed that Elisan hardly ever visited the facility. Aquino, on the other hand, said Elisan never informed him of the "intelligence report" on the planned escape.

"(If) indeed (Aquino) made the rounds in the evening of March 14 at the Sica he would have been alerted to the entry in the logbook showing a dramatic decrease in visitors of suspected ASG inmates from an average of 60 to 100 to only two visitors who availed of the conjugal visit," the report said.

Also recommended for administrative charges for gross neglect of duty, inefficiency and incompetence were jail officers SJO2 Danilo Andres, JO1 Albert Lobrio, JO1 Allan Sta. Cruz ,and JO1 Ricarte Laxamana. JO1 Homer Ortega, the team said, should also be reprimanded for going on leave before the crisis without confirming if his leave application had been approved.

Jail Chief Insp. Reyno Damaso, JO1 Sheroky Bilibili and JO1 Manuel Loyola, on the other hand, were recommended for the highest appropriate award for their prompt and heroic acts that prevented the detainees from succeeding in their escape attempt.

Apart from noting the failure of intelligence and lapses in security, the fact-finding team found out that there was a severe lack of manpower in the facility and a lack of basic jail security equipment.

The probe team found out that there was nothing special about the security accorded high-risk prisoners such as Limbong, and Andang and other detained suspected terrorists inside the Sica.

Instead, investigators said there was special treatment given to the detained suspects.

"All these lead us to the inevitable conclusion that the MMDJ authorities manning the SICA, in a pathetic attempt to appease the suspected ASG inmates, were willing to submit to their caprices and whims to 'buy peace' and avoid a riot," the probe team said.

2 hurt in MMDA sidewalk drive

By Tarra V. Quismundo

JUST another day on the job.

The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) had such take on the violence that marred the agency's clearing operations in Manila yesterday, as the agency said the commotion did not start from its side.

"That's how our job is... we are trying to discipline people even if many are against it. But being the government, we would not be cowed by such violence, and we would take as many policemen with us as possible in other operations," said Bobby Esquivel, chief of the MMDA Sidewalk Clearings Operations Group.

A team of 15 MMDA clearing operatives was met with resistance yesterday morning, as the operatives tried to remove parked pedicabs, tables, and other road obstruction on a sidewalk the agency had recently cleared on the stretch of Quirino Avenue, from the off-ramp of Nagtahan Bridge to Roxas Boulevard.

The operation ended violently, as unidentified residents, said Esquivel, started harassing the MMDA men, hurled pillboxes at the windshields of agency vehicles, and in the process harmed each other.

Denying reports that the gunshots that critically wounded two pedicab drivers came from MMDA operatives, Esquivel said his men only brought demolition tools to the operation, and none of them had firearms.

"They caused harm among themselves. They have been throwing pillboxes at our operatives since yesterday. It seems they planned this and prepared for the attack," Esquivel said in a phone interview yesterday.

The MMDA official, whose teams had several times been met with resistance since the agency began its sidewalk clearing program, said the residents were like criminal gangs that were ready to kill any MMDA operative they saw on their way.

"There were young ones among them, but I don't think we could identify them anymore since the side streets there was [occupied by] a squatters area," Esquivel explained.

MMDA driver Domingo Tagiam suffered cuts and gashes on his face, was brought to the hospital for treatment.

Two pedicab drivers, Danilo Peralta and Marcio Quinones, who were allegedly shot someone from the MMDA clearing group, were also rushed to the the hospital.

A member of the group who was wearing polo barong, allegedly pulled out a .45 caliber pistol and began firing at the crowd, hitting Peralta, according to SPO2 Rolando Nicolas.

Quinones was wounded on the right chest, he added.

Esquivel said that the clearing operations were part of maintenance efforts to keep sidewalks and easements clear of any obstruction, in line with the MMDA's metro-wide clearing program.

"We had already removed huge plant boxes there to encourage economic activities in the area, but the pedicabs were back days later," said Esquivel.

The clearing was done with the knowledge of City Engineer Armand Andres and city administrator Dino Nable, he added.

Crisano off the hook?

By DJ Yap and Luige del Puerto

FROM the frying pan and into the fire?

Fil-Am cager Alex Crisano complained to Quezon City police yesterday that a vendor of pirated DVDs snatched his Glock 9 mm pistol last Thursday night in Tandang Sora.

Responding Batasan Hills police quickly collared the suspect, recovered the pistol, and charged him with theft. But police had a question for the former Barangay Ginebra player: Did he have a permit to carry (PTC)? Crisano said he had a gun license but could not produce a permit. Carrying a licensed firearm with no permit is an offense that could carry a jail term.

A Quezon City fiscal said the cager could not be charged with illegal possession of firearms because he was not carrying the gun when it was recovered. A PNP official, however, said Crisano does not even have a PTC.

7th fire victim found

By Jean Marionne Bermudez, trainee

A BUILDING that was a home away from home for a family of five from mainland China literally became hell on earth last Wednesday when fire gutted the structure. Yesterday, the body of Ely Chua, owner of a plastic toys business, was found by firemen. His wife Tessie and children Edralin, Elizalde and Erika, also perished in the fire. Three other house helpers are still missing.

The bodies of the Chua children and their mother, and that of a maid, were retrieved after the fire was placed under control Wednesday.

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Park closed to Sunday picnickers

By Tina G. Santos

ENVIRONMENT advocates who had long lined up activities for visitors of the disputed Arroceros Park in Manila tomorrow in line with its celebration of Earth Day may just have to mark the event outside the supposed venue.

This after Mayor Lito Atienza said that the park's gate would remain closed, citing security reasons. "There are construction materials inside the property that we have to secure," he told reporters during the city's celebration of Earth Day at the forest park yesterday. Among the event's highlight was the groundbreaking ceremonies for the construction of a building for teachers, and the renaming of the park to "People's Botanical Garden."

Atienza said that Winner Foundation, caretakers of the park, had been claiming "ownership" over the property, and "the public is getting confused"

But Chit Roces, member of the foundation, said they had never claimed ownership from the start. "We're just enjoying the park. We're just after the space, the fresh air. We never disputed the fact that the lot is owned by the city government. The teachers are the ones confused and the mayor is the one sowing confusion," Roces said.

The foundation recently filed a petition in court asking for a temporary restraining order and a writ of preliminary injunction to prevent Manila from pushing through with the construction of the teachers' building.

Yesterday, the court issued an order denying the TRO . Roces said they have yet to get a copy of the decision.

Gov't sides with poor farmers in Cagayan

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

THE GOVERNMENT has favored numerous poor farmers over an influential family in Cagayan in a land dispute that had placed the judiciousness of the authorities on the spot.

The dispute involved 375 hectares of forest land that was entrusted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to 100 farmer-families for farming.

Apparently using the power and influence of its members, the Padilla family fenced off the property and drove away the farmers. One member of the family is a lawyer-politician; another is a Quezon City regional trial court judge; and still another is a former Cagayan provincial board member.

The farmers fought tooth and nail to re-acquire their property. Their efforts paid off when Justice Secretary Raul Gonzales ordered the filing of a criminal complaint against the Padillas.

Gonzales' move was backed by Natural Resources Secretary Michael Defensor who ordered the disputed land returned to the farmers.

It was high time the government showed small people that it has their interest at heart. Wasn't it President Ramon Magsaysay who said, "Those who have less in life should have more in law."

* * *

The well-connected Padillas are not taking their defeat sitting down.

They've gone to Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte, whose family publishes the Philippine Star, to complain against Tony Calvento, a columnist for one of the sister publications of the paper.

Calvento was the first to expose the Padillas' alleged oppression of the poor Cagayan farmers.

The Padillas moved to prevent Calvento from writing further about their dispute with the poor farmers. They also filed several libel suits against Calvento, using the power of the Quezon City judge among them.

Now that other columnists-notably, Willie Baun of People's Journal, among them, have written about them, the Padillas will have their hands full filing libel suits against them.

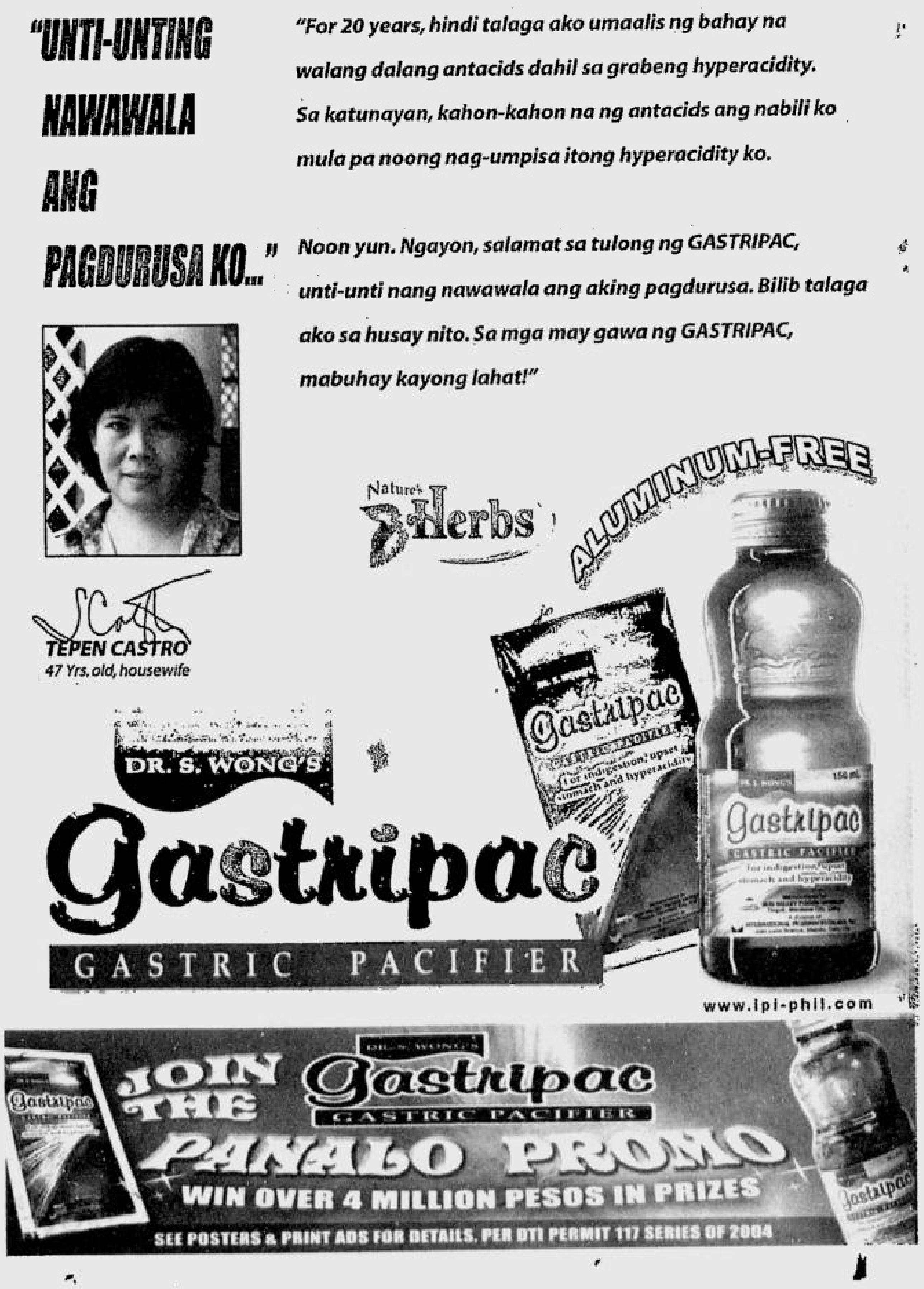
* * *

The government is stymied in going after terrorists hiding inside the camps of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) because of the ongoing peace talks with the Moro rebel group.

Philippine National Police chief Arturo Lomibao says he can't order an attack on the MILF camps coddling or training terrorists that will violate the peace process.

Lomibao admits that he's in possession of intelligence reports that Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyah members are being protected by the MILF

Lomibao's pronouncement belies MILF claims that it did not protect or hide Abu Sayyaf and JI terrorists.



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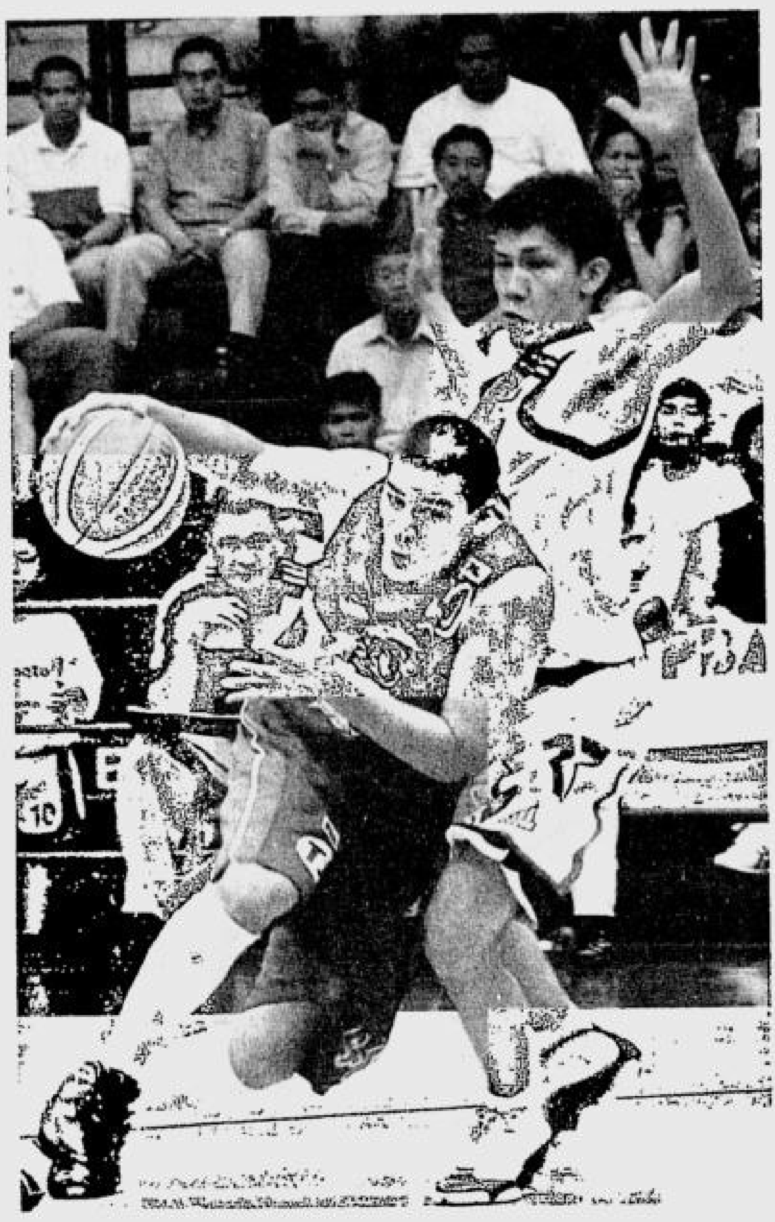
WHAT'S INSIDE

■ No. 2 Agassi rallies past Spanish ace /A28

■ Singh grabs Houston lead /A29

■ BAP has to deal with POC chief /A27

■ Diay says athletes need not do odd jobs /A30



SAN MIGUEL playmaker Olsen Racela shuts the door on Purefoods gunner Noy Castillo in their game Wednesday. The Beermen shaded the Hotdogs, 71-70.

AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Second unit shines as SLR rips Ginebra

GAMES TOMORROW (*Araneta Coliseum*)
[illegible]15 p.m.—Stanges Papo Movie-Pirelli Re (Italy) vs San Mig Coffee-RP Team A
6:45 p.m.—Iran National Team vs San Mig Coffee-RP Team B

By June Navarro

ANTIPOLO CITY—It's no coincidence that Chester Tolomia shines every time Sta. Lucia Realty goes up against Barangay Ginebra.

Meeting the Kings for the second time in the conference, Tolomia again proved a point against his former team by sparking the Realtors to a 91-81 win last night in the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Ynares Center here.

Tolomia combined with Gilbert Demape, Rafael Santos and Ricky Calimag in the second quarter as the Realtors surged ahead of the listless Kings.

"Coach (Al Chua) told us to double our efforts to make up for the absence of Marlou (Aquino)," said Tolomia, who played in the Philippine Basketball League for a year after being released by the Kings in the 2003 season.

Aquino broke his streak of 221 games played and will be out for two weeks after sustaining a fractured left hand against Shell last week.

In the second game, Alaska drubbed Shell, 98-84, stretching the conference's longest winning streak to five and climbing to solo second behind idle San Miguel Beer.

Dickey Simpkins had 29 points, 27 rebounds and five assists for the Aces, who now carry a 6-4 slate after sending the Turbo Chargers into a tie

SECOND/ A27

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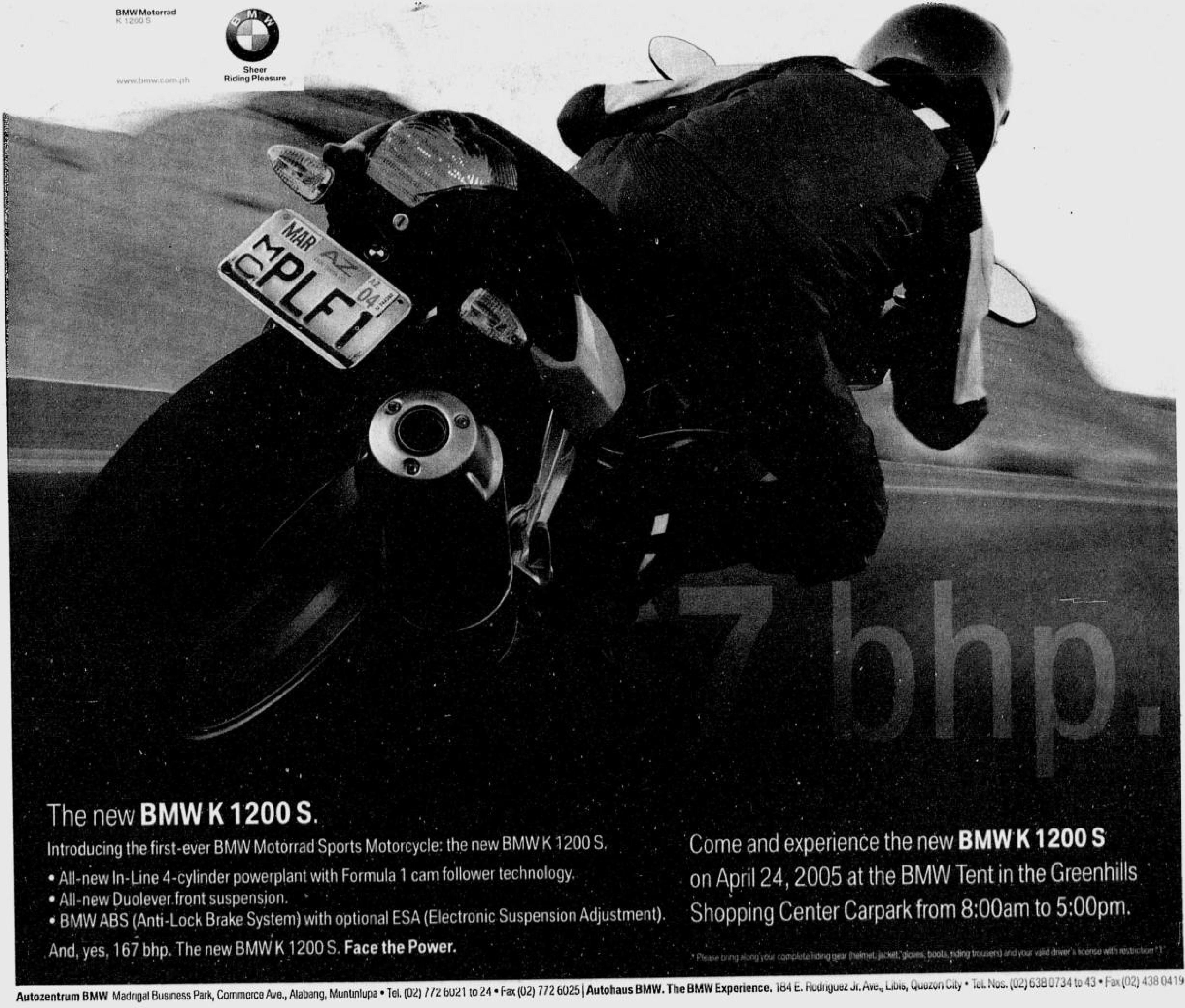

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89-25 ROUT

RP-Cebuana five exposes Italians

By Roy Luarca

WHAT a difference criticisms can make.

The much-maligned RP-Cebuana Lhuillier five showed its strong side yesterday by routing Italy's Stranges Pap Movie, 89-25, at the adidas Sports Kamp inside Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

In a sudden transformation of form, the Nationals, who were heavily criticized for losing to the Parañaque Jets in a National Basketball Conference pre-season tournament, shone in both offense and defense as they toyed with the taller Italians from the start.

The Nationals held the Italians—who will be competing with the two PBA training teams and an Iran team in a pocket tournament starting tomorrow—to just seven points in the second half to the delight of Coach Boyzie Zamar and manager Jean Henri Lhuillier.

"The boys concentrated on defense. They really wanted to prove something," said Zamar.

Bolstered by Kelly Williams and backcourtmen Dennis Madrid and Richie Melencio, who missed that game against the Jets due to injuries, the Nationals sped to a 64-21 third-quarter lead.

Even then, however, the Nationals never dropped their guard and continued to pepper the Italians with quick baskets that resulted in the 64-point blowout, the biggest ever by an RP team against a European squad.

Nino Cañaleta topscored for RP-Cebuana with 13 points, followed by Ruben de la Rosa with 12 and Williams, a discovery of National Coach Chot Reyes who also watched the game, with 11.

2 coffee brews

THE RP basketball teams training under coach Chot Reyes will carry the colors of San Mig Coffee I and II.

SMC president Ramon S. Ang will be the manager of the RP-San Mig Coffee teams I and II which will have their first test in a pocket tournament at the Araneta Coliseum starting tomorrow.

Also invited to the three-day PBA side event are the Italian club team Pirelli and the national men's team of Iran.

Peping: Godfather system vital in RP search for Olympic gold

JOSE "Peping" Cojuangco, admitting that winning a first-ever Olympic gold medal for RP drove him into seeking the POC presidency, is asking the godfathers of sports to stay after the 23rd Southeast Asian Games later this year.

"We have a chance, we have hope. I'm hoping that even after the SEA Games, the donors would continue to support their athletes," Cojuangco said.

In a spontaneous, 30-minute speech in yesterday's National Press Forum of the Philippine Press Institute at the Diamond Hotel on Roxas Boulevard, Cojuangco exhorted the sports patrons and athletes to "get together."

Stressing that the lack of commercial leagues for other sports after basketball has hindered the advancement of the Filipino in other disciplines, Cojuangco said "this is what the POC is trying to correct."

The godfather system, launched by First Gentleman Mike Arroyo a few months ago, has generated funds amounting to P160 million earmarked for training of RP athletes for the Games.

However, Cojuangco rued the fact that the sum was not even half of the total amount required.

Cojuangco also bared that at least P20 million a month is needed to feed these athletes.

Cojuangco, noting that Filipino athletes could not yet avail of advanced scientific training enjoyed by athletes from other countries, said only the godfather system could hasten availability of the system here.

"Modern technology in training wins international competitions," said the former congressman from Tarlac. "Unless we apply the latest technologies, we are not going to go anywhere."

Musong R. Castillo

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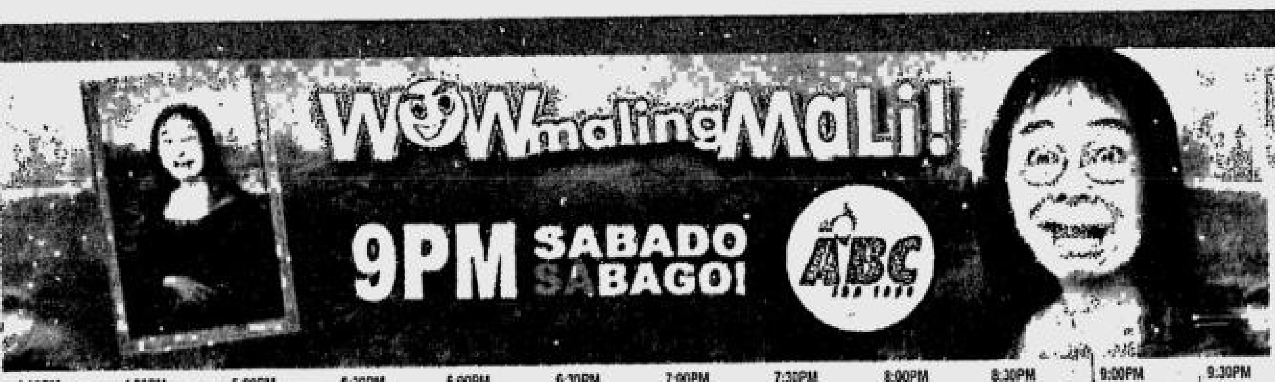
Saturday, April 23, 2005



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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2	Entertainment Konek				Kaya Mo Ba 'To		Nginiig: The Hidden Files		Star Dance		Quizon Avenue		TV Patrol World	Magandang Gabi Bayan		Star Cinema Presents			Kontrobersyal (11.45PM)
ABC 5	Trip Ko 'To	The Basketball Show		Soccer Showdown		Loren		Diretsahan		Viva Box Office				Sing Galing		Maverick & Ariel	Onstage		
GMA 7	Startalk			Wish Ko Lang		Wag Kukurap	Pinoy Pop Superstar		Bitoy's Funniest Videos		Extra Challenge		Imbestigador		Idol Ko Si Kap			Showbiz Stripped	
RPN 9		Global Window		Biyaheng Langit	Kids TV	Hanapbuhay Overseas		Isumbong mo kay Tulfo		Medical Investigation		CSI: Miami							
IBC 13		Home Shopping Network		Retro TV	Good Take	Home Shopping Network		EZ Shop		Japan 9 Ball Festival				Bitag		In This Corner		Ugnayang Pambansa	
JackTV		WWE Bottomline		Wwe Raw				Wwe Heat		Wow		Slamball		UFC Recall				Thunder Box	
Nickelodeon	Girls In Love	Kenan & Kel	1, 2, 3	Snck: Unfabulous (New)/All Grown Up/ My Dad The Rock Star/ Drake & Josh				Danny Phantom	My Life As A Teenage Robot	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Fairly Odd Parents	Sabrina, The Teenage Witch	Cow At The Moo-ves	Girls In Love	Kenan & Kel	As Told By Ginger	Rocket Power	Hey Arnold!	The Wild Thornberrys
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Presents		Top Of The Pops	MYX Remakes	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	Club MYX	Take 5	OPM MYX		MYX Live!	
ETC		Saturday Night Live		Temptation Island		Joan Of Arcadia		The O.C.		Queer Eye For The Straight		Last Comic Standing		Saturday Night Live		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
Cinema One	Kahit Buhay Ko		Isang Tanong, Isang Sagot				My Movie				Bagsik Ng Kamao				Three Seasons				
Studio 23				PBL Game 2				Sports TV	Mr. Bean	7th Heaven	Gilmore Girls (7:45 PM)		The Bachelor (8.40PM)		Studio 23 Present				Real Deal
AXN								Hollywood's Greatest Stunts	E Buzz	30 Seconds To Fame	30 Seconds To Fame	Ripley's Believe It or Not		CSI: NY (Season I)					
Star World	Action Man	Totally Outrageous Behavior Caught On Tape	Weird TV	Miami Vice		Adventure Inc.		Roswell		Dark Angel		TNA Xplosion		Most Incredible Animal Rescues/ Saturday Shockumentaries		Dog The Bounty Hunter	Cops	The Kumars At No. 42	Goodness Gracious Me
CNN	Diplomatic License	World News	World Business This Week	World News	People In The News	Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	World News	CNN Business Traveller	World News	Design 360	World News	Talk Asia	World News	The Daily Show With John Stewart, Global Edition	CNN Presents: A Rising Tide The Threat Of Global Warming	
National Geographic		Big Bite Nite				Battle For The Beaches		Creature Feature				Be The Creature		The Snake Wranglers	Wildlife Diary	Big Bite Nite			
Solar Sports					TV Overtime B. King	WTA Qatar Total Open '05			Sports Desk		Kotv Magazine	KOTV Classics		Hardwood Classics Lakers @ Sonics '87					NBA Inside Stuff
Lifestyle Network	Carol Duvall	HGTV Special		Radical Sabbatical	Road & Track	Genuine Article	Food Fight	Date Plate	Emeril Live		Nigella Bites	Brini Maxwell Show	Royalty A-Z		Modern Girl's Guide	E! True Hollywood Story		Look For Less	Behind The Velvet Ropes
HBO	Gridlock'd (2.40 PM)			Phantom Force (4:15 PM)				Ballistic Ecks Vs. Sever (5.50PM)			Dragonheart (7.20 PM)			Darkness Falls			Six Feet Under 44: That's My Dog (10.25PM)		Two Weeks Notice (11.20PM)
Star Movies				Cruel Intentions			Agent Cody Banks			A Guy Thing (7.15 PM)				Underworld				EDTV	
Cartoon Network		The Detective Squad	Tom & Jerry Show	Swat Kats	Duck Dodgers	Xiaolin Showdown	Winx Club	Atomic Betty	Foster's Home For Imaginary Friends	The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy				Cartoon Cartoon Show	Power Rangers Ninja Storm	Duck Dodgers	Codename Kids Next Door	Samurai Jack	Xiaolin Showdown
Disney Channel	Potatoes And Dragons	Sabrina, The Animated Series	The Legend Of Tarzan	Wicked Science	Kim Possible	Totally Spies	That's So Raven	American Dragon	Phil Of The Future	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney			Dave The Barbarian	Mr. Bean	America's Funniest Home Video	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax	3 Ninja's Kick Back (2.45 PM)			Music From Another Room				Dracula Dead And Loving It			Pinata Survival Island			Panic Room				The Core (10.55PM)	
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	Changi		Changi		Mike Bassett England Manager				Verdict In Blood				Dog Gone Love			Bug (10:35PM)		
Discovery Channel		Human Discovery		Science Frontiers		Unsolved History				Wild Discovery				Rides		The New Detectives		Extreme Discovery	
Sports Plus		Shell Houston Open Day2				Samsung/Radioshack 500 Highlights		Italia Serie A Highlights 12		Bikini Destination		World's Greatest Auto Shows		Strongman		Shell Houston Open Day2			
NBN	Value Vision		Value Vision			GSIS Member's Hour		Yan Ang Pinoy		Gold & Glory In Greece		Search For The 1st Tanduay Billiards Player		To Be Announced			Business & Leisure		

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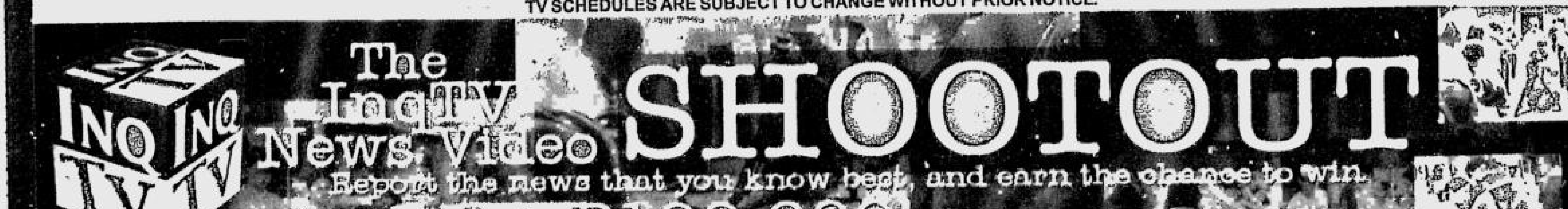
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BAP has to deal with POC chief

By Musong R. Castillo

THE BASKETBALL Association of the Philippines (BAP) will have to answer to Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco.

EALA: POC's request

COJUANGCO

Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) commissioner Noli Eala made this stand yesterday following reports that BAP secretary-general Graham Lim was still insistent on fielding the Cebuana Lhuillier-backed RP team to the Seaba tournament in June.

That team was shamed by the Parañaque squad of actors Anjo Yllana and Richard Gomez during the National Basketball Conference (NBC) championship last week.

"Remember that it is not the PBA which offered a team (to the Seaba)," Eala told the INQUIRER over the phone. "It was (POC) president Cojuangco's request that the PBA step in."

Eala said he couldn't care less if the BAP would refuse its help, the Seaba not being part of the pro league's long-term program of reforming basketball in the country.

"Obviously, Mr. Cojuangco has no confidence in the team that they (BAP) were forming," Eala explained.

Eala said the PBA is committed to coming up with a long-term solution to regain basketball prominence in Asia and that the Seaba was the "shortest-term" solution he could think of.

Meanwhile, the PBA has set a special board meeting for Tuesday to discuss the possibility of fielding an all-pro team to the Seaba, the Southeast Asian qualifier to the ABC.

PBA board chair Buddy Encarnado said the pro league would most likely turn the Seaba stint down.

Dispatch our pros

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

IT IS ironic, indeed, that the country that erected the first play-for-pay basketball league in Asia still suffers from basketball identity. Or is plagued by basketball concerns. Amusing, to say the least.

The Philippines, which unfurled the professional Philippine Basketball Association in 1975, when the now-incumbent PBA commissioner Noli Eala was still in grade school, is now torn between two schools of thought.

One wants professionals to represent the country in two international tournaments this year, starting with the Seaba in June in Singapore and winding up with the SEA Games in November in Manila.

The other wants amateurs to do it for the country.

Hey, fellas, what are we debating about here in the first place?

Professionals are merely at level with the amateurs?

Amateurs deserve a trip abroad because that has been their dream from the day they started dribbling a basketball?

C'mon, quit the crap, will you?

Ask yourselves: Do we want a basketball crown or not?

I am amused simply because that question should not even be entertained in the first place.

If the PBA governors will meet specifically to resolve the question, I could die laughing.

With the PBA and the BAP now burying the hatchet after decades of hostilities, there's no more need to discuss the wisdom behind the move to field a team sprinkled with PBA players to international tournaments. That's become a given.

Have you seen NCAA players in America representing America in either the World Championships or the Olympics?

Look, even the so-called best players in the world—the NBA greats, who else—got themselves a shameful drubbing in both the last World Championships and the Olympics.

Hey, the times, they are a-changin'.

You send our best abroad and they aren't even sure anymore of bringing home the bacon, to use a cliché. And yet, we seriously entertain sending amateurs in their place.

In 15 years, our best finish when we restarted sending our best—the best are our PBA players, in case you still have any doubts, fellas—was second. That was in the 1990 Beijing Asian Games, when Robert Jaworski coached a PBA team to second place behind China.

We sent PBA players again to the Asian Games editions in Hiroshima 1994, Bangkok 1998 and Busan 2002. What was our best finish from those three trips?

Third in Bangkok 1998.

I repeat: Now that the PBA and BAP have kissed and made up, by all means we should make the most out of it, at all times. Send our PBA players to all tournaments abroad.

There are those who say we should also send amateurs overseas.

I buy that but only on a per-tournament basis. Selective.

For example, if a tournament held, say in Hong Kong, is merely a club-level event, then dispatch the amateurs pronto. Not much national pride is at stake there. Just mainly prestige, if not ego. You can't archive that.

Now, if a tournament involves the participation of countries—whether the event is third-rate or not—there should be no more debating whether professionals should be fielded or not.

Common sense, fellas, common sense.

Any competition that carries the national colors should always be treated with pride and must prick the heart more than the head.

So, to repeat, are we going to send our PBA players to both the Seaba and SEA Games this year?

If your answer is yes, you know what patriotism is.

Patriots fight to win. Cowards fight to die.

2nd unit shines . . .

From page A25

with the Kings at 5-5.

With Tolomia and Demape leading the assault, the Realtors overhauled a 15-19 deficit in the first quarter to zoom to a 53-33 halftime spread while starters Kenneth Duremdes and Dennis Espino cheered on the bench.

"As veterans, we took over when Ginebra was trying to come back in the fourth quarter," said Espino, who teamed with Duremdes after the Kings came within 77-70. "But it's the team's second unit which won the game for us."

Espino banged in eight of his 13 points in the pivotal period as the Realtors improved to 4-6.

The scores:

First Game

STA. LUCIA 91—Demape 15, Duremdes 14, Espino 13, Santos 12, Calimag 11, Tolomia 9, Fletcher 8, Mendoza 5, Omolon 2, Agapito 2.

GINEBRA 81—Elisma 26, Menk 21, Santos 12, Caguioa 11, Seigle 5, Salvacion 2, Dimaunahan 2, Noble 2, Echavez 0, Adducul 0.

Quarters: 15-19, 53-33, 75-59, 91-81

Second Game

ALASKA 98—Simpkins 29, Cariaso 17, Cablay 14, Cortez 11, Thoss 8, Allado 5, Hugnatan 4, Hawkins 3, Wilson 3, Padilla 2, Tejada 2, Johnson 0, Locsin 0.

SHELL 84—Tubid 16, Mamaril 15, Ferrera 10, Alvarez 9, Dela Cruz 7, Yap 7, Sharma 6, Wilson 4, Jackson 4, Sotto 2, Cruz 2, Sta. Maria 2.

Quarters: 33-18, 58-36, 81-60, 98-84

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President, World Wildlife Foundation (WWF)

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Representative, 3rd District of Bukidnon

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What We Can Do To Help Our Environment?
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Forestry Laws: What Can the Youth Do?
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Answer the questions for a chance to win cool prizes in the preliminary draws.
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5
For more details, see promo flyers or log on to www.inquestor.com

GAME MECHANICS

The Registration:
1. To join Philippine Daily Inquirer's INQuest Adventure, participants must register first by texting in this format: INQ Reg <full name>*<complete address>*<age>*<gender> Ex: INQ Reg Juan dela Cruz*1234 Ortigas Ave Pasig*34*M
2. Send to 2320 for Globe/Touch Mobile and Sun Cellular subscribers or 309 for Smart/Addict/Talk 'N Text subscribers. Free registration.
3. Upon registration, your mobile phone number is automatically locked to your name.

The Game:
1. Buy a copy of the Philippine Daily Inquirer to follow the INQuest Adventure Mystery and guess the answer to the questions found at the end of the chapter installments.
2. To help you answer the questions, clues can be found in various sections in Philippine Daily Inquirer, INQuest website or INQTV (every Thursdays, 8 to 9pm at ABC5). To answer, text in this format, INQ Q<question #> <answer> and so on. Ex. INQ Q1 A
3. Participant is allowed a maximum of three (3) answers per question. Each text answer entitles the participant one (1) raffle entry to qualify for the preliminary draws.
4. For each successful text sent, participants will receive a confirmation message. The cost for each successful message sent is P2.50 for Globe/Touch Mobile/Smart/Addict and Talk 'N Text subscribers and P3.00 for Sun Cellular subscribers.
5. There will be a total of eight (8) preliminary draws (1 winner each) and one (1) final draw (5 winners). There will only be one (1) winner per question (preliminary draw) but an individual may win again in the succeeding preliminary draws. Final draw winner can only win once.

Clue	Clue Date	Cut-Off	Draw	Bonus Prizes for Correct Answers
Q1	March 9	March 12	March 14	Apple iPod 4GB
Q2	March 16	March 19	March 28	Canon PowerShot A75
Q3	March 23	March 26	April 4	Apple iPod 20GB
Q4	March 31	April 2	April 4	Canon PowerShot A75
Q5	April 5	April 9	April 11	Apple iPod 20GB
Q6	April 10	April 16	April 18	Canon PowerShot A75
Q7	April 17	April 23	April 25	Apple iPod 4GB
Q8	April 24	April 30	May 2	Canon PowerShot A75
Q9	May 1	May 7	May 9	5 x P80,000.00 Cash

6. The winner drawn from the preliminary draw (Q1-Q8) automatically gets to win a Guyito doll. An additional prize (Apple iPod or Canon Digicam) is given if he/she sent a correct answer.
7. The five (5) entries drawn for the final draw (Q9) will automatically receive a cash prize of P20,000.00 each. An additional P80,000.00 cash prize will be given to those with correct answer.
8. Winners will be notified thru registered mail and names will also be published two (2) days after the draw.
9. Metro Manila preliminary and final draw winners must claim their prizes at the PDI office located at, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City.
10. Provincial preliminary draw winners have the option of either claiming their prize in person at the PDI office or have the prize sent to them via courier service. Allow 2-3 weeks for delivery.
11. The following must be presented for verification:
    a. Valid ID with picture (e.g., driver's license, passport, employee ID)
    b. In case valid IDs do not indicate birthdate/age, present a birth certificate
    c. Copy of PDI's notification/confirmation letter
    d. PDI mast head (including date) taken from issue where question was published
12. Prizes must be claimed within sixty (60) days after receipt of confirmation letter. Unclaimed prizes will be forfeited in favor of PDI with prior DTI approval.
13. All prizes are tax-free, not transferable and not convertible to cash.
14. The winners declared by PDI, DTI and its representatives are final.
15. All employees of PDI Group of Companies, sponsors of INQuest, their advertising agencies/third party suppliers and their relatives up to the third degree of consanguinity or affinity are disqualified from joining the promo
16. Promo period is from March 2 to May 7, 2005.

Per DTI-NCR Permit # 1123, Series of 2005.

Delasin trails by 5, Jenny quits

MORELIA, Mexico—Natalie Gulbis shot a 6-under 66 on Thursday to take a two-stroke lead in the Corona Morelia Championship, while Lorena Ochoa struggled to a 71 in her second LPGA Tour event in her homeland.

Fil-Am Dorothy Delasin fired a 71 and was bunched in a group at 10th to 17th places, five shots off the lead.

Jennifer Rosales of the Philippines, withdrew after seven holes because of an injury to her right wrist.

Rosales said she hurt the same wrist last year, causing her to withdraw from some tournaments. She also withdrew from the MasterCard Classic last month after stepping in a hole and twisting her ankle.

Sweden's Carin Koch was two strokes back at 68 along with Audra Burks. Burks had an eagle, three birdies and a bogey.

Nancy Scranton offset three bogeys with six birdies and was tied for fourth place with Sweden's Maria Hjorth and Italy's Giulia Sergas at 69 on the Tres Marias Residential Golf Club course.

The 22-year-old Gulbis started on the back nine and, after opening with a par, reeled off three straight birdies. She added three more after making the turn, using long, accurate drives to stay out of trouble.

"I'm very fortunate that I have good distance off the tee and that definitely helped on a golf course like this one," said Gulbis, whose six birdies came on putts of less than 10 feet. "I had a lot of wedges today and you can fire at pins when you have short wedges in your hand."

Gulbis, looking for her first victory in her fourth LPGA season, said she's been in the lead on tour "six to 10 times."

"It's not a lot of pressure, but there are very good players on tour," she said.

Burks made eagle at the 355-yard, par-4 17th, her eighth hole, sinking a 129-yard wedge shot.

Ochoa was the story heading into the event. She won twice last year to become the LPGA Tour's first Mexican champion and is trying for the second time to win in her homeland.

The 23-year-old native of Guadalajara, just 280 km (175 miles) from colonial Morelia, is tied for 28th and is very familiar with the layout.

"The first round is the hardest one, so I'm over with that," Ochoa said. "I know where I am right now and I think I'm going to feel more relaxed tomorrow. The good thing is I know the course, I know the leaders, how they play."

Ochoa started on the back nine and bogeyed Nos. 11 and 13. She made birdie at Nos. 14 and 18 and added another at the second. At the par-3 third, she hit an 8-iron into the water, and settled for a double bogey.

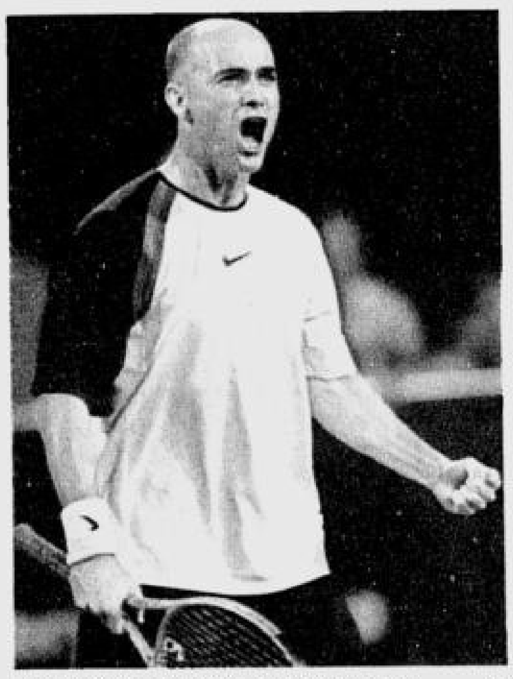
"I hit the ball pretty good," she said. "Just a couple of bad shots and it cost me a lot of strokes."

Ochoa insisted nerves weren't a problem, despite hundreds of cheering fans, including dozens who followed her every hole, trudging up steep hills despite stifling temperatures in the high 80s and blazing sunshine.

Crowd noise and a large press following slowed Ochoa's round, which lasted more than five hours. The raucous atmosphere drew complaints from other players.

The crowds are expected to get larger this weekend, and 100 friends and family members were expected to arrive in Morelia to cheer on Ochoa. *AP*

DEFENDING champion Vijay Singh hits his tee shot on the ninth hole during



ANDRE Agassi celebrates his victory. AP

No. 2 Agassi rallies past Spanish ace

HOUSTON—Second-seeded Andre Agassi rallied from a loss in the first set to beat Alex Calatrava, 3-6, 6-4, 7-5, Thursday and advance to the quarterfinals of the US Men's Clay Court Championships.

Agassi appeared to have the match under control when he broke the Spaniard in the sixth game of the third set and took a 4-2 lead. But his serve failed him in the next game as he double-faulted twice and was broken.

Calatrava held in the eighth game and pulled even at 4-4 by serving a love game.

"I threw up a couple of double faults at a bad time, leading 4-2," Agassi said. "I was feeling too good and got too aggressive.

"You don't finish off matches by trying to blast through somebody on clay. You've got to finish off by how you got there which is by discipline, shot selection and work ethic. I just lost concentration there."

Agassi finally got the victory in the 12th game. He hit a backhand down the line for a winner to force the second match point and followed with another backhand to the same corner.

"At the end, there were two clean backhands up the line and that's what you're hoping for, to do it at the right time," Agassi said.

Agassi nearly squandered a 4-1 lead in the second set. Calatrava broke serve in the seventh game and both players stayed on serve until the 10th game, when Calatrava double-faulted to force set point. Agassi hit a forehand winner down the line to take the second set.

Agassi will next face France's Sebastien Grosjean who beat Oscar Hernandez of Spain, 6-4, 5-7, 6-2.

"He's (Grosjean) a talented player, he's effective on clay. I'll definitely have to be executing my shots and playing good," Agassi said. "Each match on the clay is so crucial for me," Agassi said. "You get more comfortable the more you play on it."

Defending champion Tommy Haas of Germany will play Jurgen Melzer of Austria and top-seeded Andy Roddick will meet Luis Horna. *AP*

Snickers slates b'minton camp

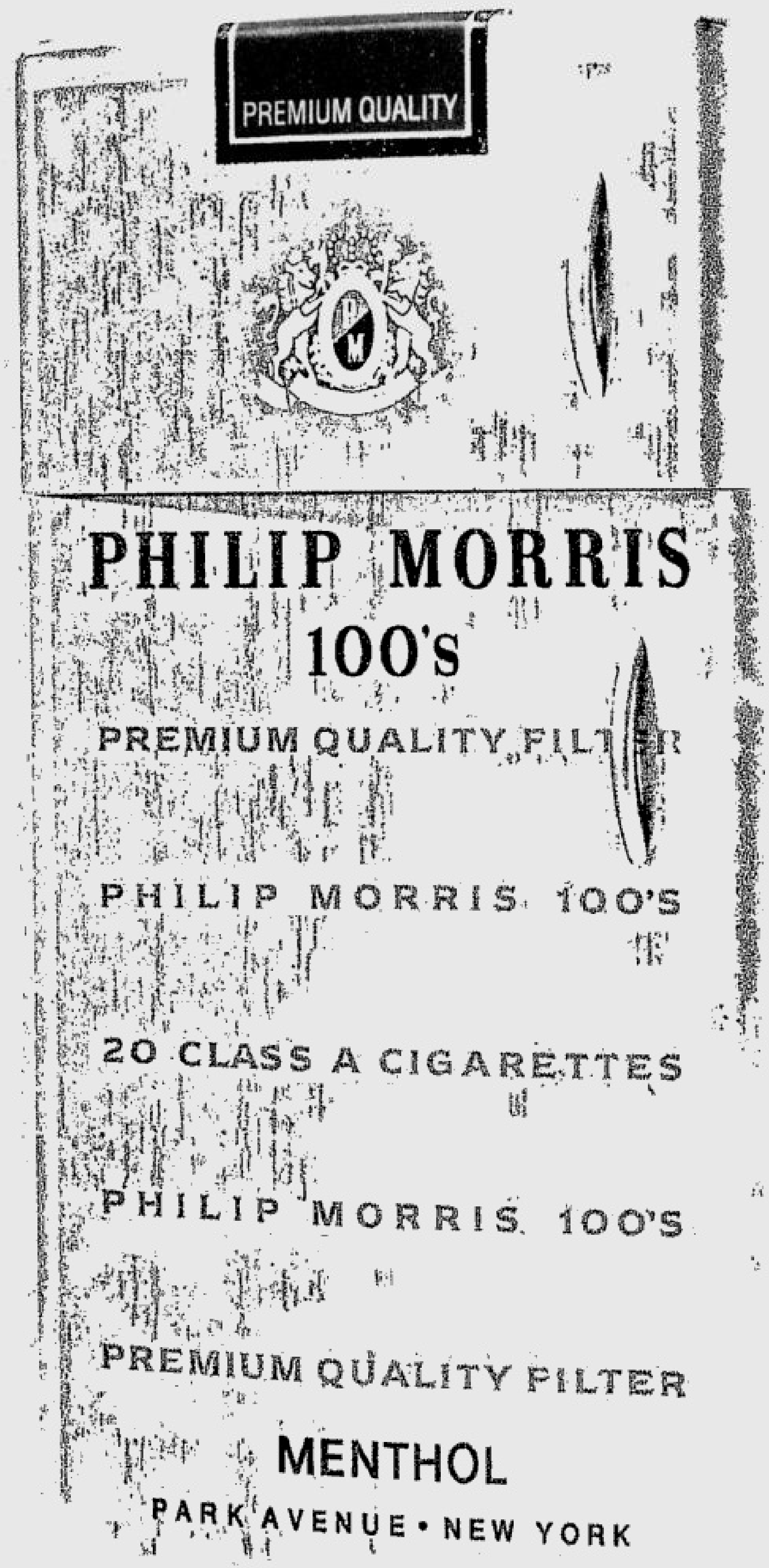
THE SNICKERS Badminton Clinic is set to kick off May 2 at the Olympic Badminton Club, Libis, Quezon City.

Sessions are from May 2-6 and May 9-13, with classes in the morning from 9 to 11 a.m. and in the afternoon from 2 to 4 p.m. from Monday to Friday.

Fees for the said event are as follows :
P2,800 for Kids (15 years old and below)
P3,200 for Adults (16 years old and above)

Fees are inclusive of court usage, players kit and trainers.

A Mini tournament will be scheduled for all students at the end of the program. For inquiries and reservations, please contact the Olympic Badminton Club at 6320797 and 6327653.



Government Warnin
is dangerous

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Singh grabs Houston lead

the first round of the Houston Open. AP

HUMBLE, Texas—Fresh from inclusion in the World Golf Hall of Fame, Vijay Singh tied the course record with an 8-under-par 64 for a one-shot lead Thursday after the first round of the Houston Open.

The 42-year-old Fijian, No. 2 in the world rankings, extended his streak of par or better to 56 holes at the Redstone Golf Club, where he won this event a year ago.

Singh laughed when told of his bogey-free string going back to last year, when he finished 11 under and won by two shots.

"Don't mention that," he said. "I struck the ball really well today, had a very good feel of the greens and my speed was good, and when you do that you can make some birdies."

After Singh came Australians Gavin Coles and Brendan Jones. Eight players were at 67. Six, including John Daly, were another shot back.

Singh was announced Wednesday as the latest inductee into the Hall of Fame, although he said he learned three weeks ago the honor was coming, meaning it wasn't a distraction now.

"My focus this week is coming out here," he said.

Still, the recognition, both off and on the course Thursday, was appreciated.

"Every player out there said something about it, so that was good," Singh said.

So was his round.

Starting on the back nine, he had pars on four of his first five holes, then birdied 15, 16 and 17 and made the turn at 4-under. He finished the front side with a flurry, getting birdies on three of the last four holes.

"You sort of expect him to be there," said Coles, on pace to share the lead with Singh before he missed the green and landed in a bunker for a bogey at No. 17.

It was the only glitch in his round.

"That was a lot of fun," Coles said. "The balls were just going in from everywhere. It was tremendous. The first three holes, I had three putts over 20 ft and I made two of them. So, that was quite a nice start."

Then he had consecutive birdies at Nos. 5 and 6 and again at Nos. 8 and 9 to finish the front side 6 under at 29.

"Anything is possible, mate," Coles said of his chances for a first US tour victory.

The 36-year-old player struggled as a rookie two years ago and wound up last year on the Nationwide Tour, finishing 20th in earnings and winning once. His best finish this year is a tie for 17th at Tucson.

The long, 7,500-yard Redstone layout leaves players who are not big hitters at a disadvantage, the 5-foot-4 Coles said.

"I've just got to learn to forget all that stuff and go and play and hit it on the fairway and hit it on the green," he said. "If you look at the stats, it's the guy that putts the best and chips the best. It's not necessarily the guy that hits it the longest." *AP*

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MONTGOMERIE: Five down AFP

JW CLASSIC

Miñoza, Que off to bad starts

BEIJING—Australia's Adam Scott set a new course record at Pine Valley Golf Resort and Country Club after firing a 9-under-par 63 Friday for a three stroke lead after the delayed first round of the Johnnie Walker Classic.

Scott resumed the first round Friday with two birdies followed by a run of birdie-eagle-birdie to better the course record of 65 set last year by Gerald Rosales of the Philippines.

Filipinos Frankie Miñoza and Angelo Que were nowhere near Rosales' record, shooting 75s that put them 12 strokes off the lead.

"Things were just going my way," said Scott, the world No. 10.

Starting the round on Thursday from the 10th, Scott birdied the par fives on the 13th and 16th, as well as the 18th hole to stay bogey free before play was halted due to strong winds.

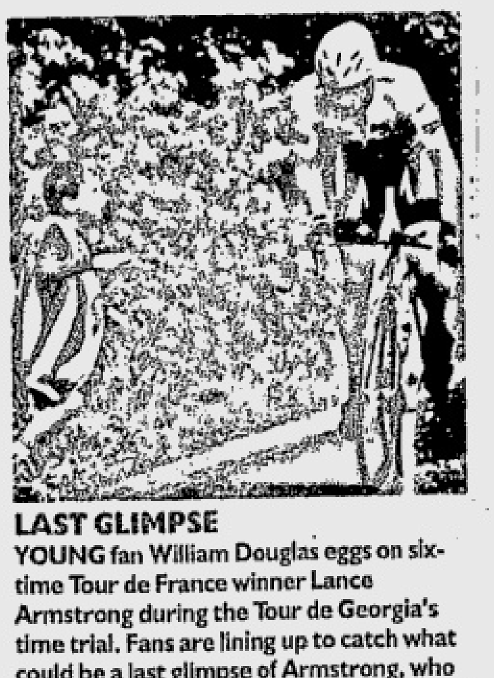
"Two different days but my game stayed the same," said the 24-year-old Scott. "I played great yesterday and hit a pretty good score despite the conditions, and this morning I kept swinging in the rhythm."

Thailand's Chawalit Plaphol shot a 6-under 66 to take second place, just ahead of Scott's playing partner, Sergio Garcia of Spain, who made five birdies to finish 5-under 67.

Garcia is joined on 67 with Australia's Adam Fraser and Chen Yuan-chi of Taiwan, who joined Scott in shooting an eagle on the par-5 5th hole.

Retief Goosen of South Africa kept himself within sight of the leaders, firing four birdies to for a 4-under 68, equal with Scotland's Colin Montgomerie, who made five birdies against one bogey.

South Africa's Ernie Els, a two-time Johnnie Walker Classic winner, finished 1-under 71after hitting three bogeys on the back nine. *AP*



LAST GLIMPSE

YOUNG fan William Douglas eggs on six-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong during the Tour de Georgia's time trial. Fans are lining up to catch what could be a last glimpse of Armstrong, who has announced he will retire after the 2005 Tour de France. REUTERS

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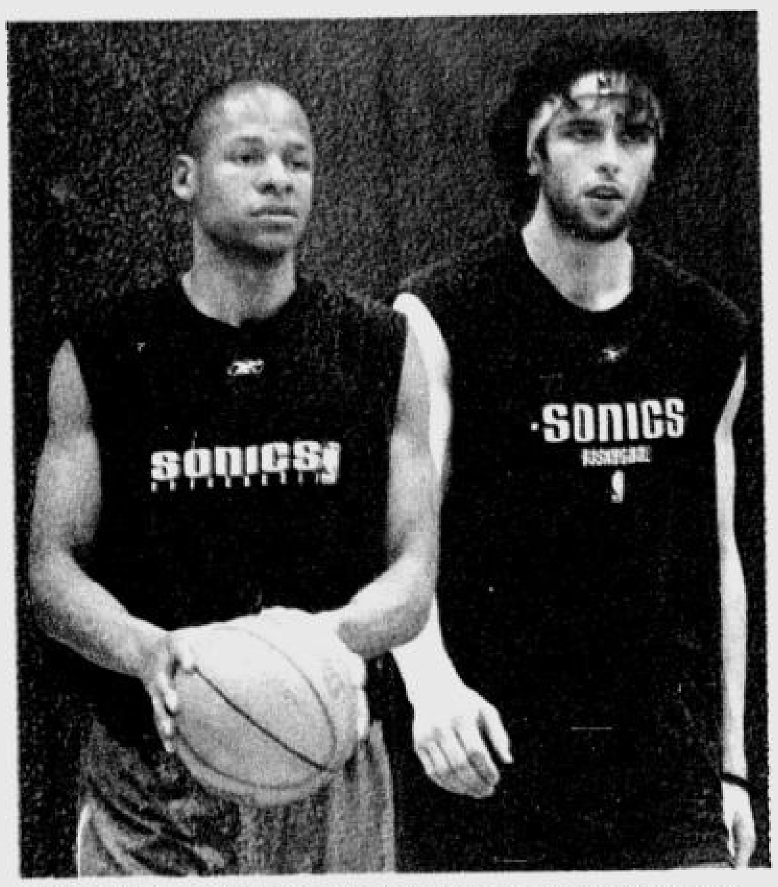


SEATTLE'S Ray Allen (left) and Vladimir Radmanovic get ready for practice Thursday. The Supersonics face the Sacramento Kings in the first round of the NBA playoffs. AP

NBA playoffs: Everybody's a target

NEW YORK—After a season of chaos and change, the NBA playoffs will begin this weekend without a target team for everyone to take aim at.

Not too long ago, this time of year revolved around the Los Angeles Lakers.

Shaquille O'Neal is still around, the massive centerpiece of another top team. But he's wearing red and black these days, playing for the Heat and taking every available opportunity to ridicule the Lakers for trading him to Miami.

Gary Payton is still kicking, too, with the Boston Celtics, one year removed from the failed project of pairing himself with Shaq, Kobe Bryant and Karl Malone on a dysfunctional Lakers team that was stunned by Detroit in the championship round.

The Pistons have returned to the playoffs, with speculation swirling around coach Larry Brown's future.

But with the postseason beginning Saturday, and the Phoenix Suns holding the top seed after finishing with the league's best record, the 2005 playoffs will unfold with several of the NBA's superstars sitting on the sidelines wondering how they missed out on one of the most wide-open chances for a championship in decades.

Recent playoffs always began with challengers knowing they might face the daunting prospect of facing O'Neal and Bryant—Lakers teammates since 1997—and trying to outwit their coach, Phil Jackson, who accumulated nine titles over 12 years.

Anyone wanting a title in the years prior to that had to go against Michael Jordan, Larry Bird, or Magic Johnson—superstars of their eras who went to the playoffs year after year as heavy favorites.

This season, there's no marquee team and no superstar tandem to be toppled, creating a greater sense that it's a wide open race for the trophy.

"It is clear that the Lakers are the team to love or hate, and a playoffs without the Lakers are going to draw lower (ratings) than one with them," NBA commissioner David Stern said. "But aside from that, there are some interesting and exciting teams that are generating coverage, and a lot of young players and player combinations that people are talking about.

"So we anticipate a very lively playoffs with fans very much interested and engaged," Stern said.

The playoffs begin Saturday with four first-round games: Philadelphia-Detroit, Houston-Dallas, Indiana-Boston and Sacramento-Seattle.

Sunday's games are New Jersey-Miami, Washington-Chicago, Denver-San Antonio and Memphis-Phoenix, and the first round will continue over 16 days—a reduction from the 18-day span from recent years that led to complaints of too much downtime in the opening round.

The first round includes several interesting pairings, with defending champion Pistons going against Philadelphia and Brown trying to figure out a strategy to stop the league's leading scorer and his old nemesis, Allen Iverson.

Additionally, Tim Duncan and the San Antonio Spurs, who won titles in 1999 and 2003 and are considered by many the favorites to emerge from the West, face George Karl's rejuvenated Denver Nuggets, who ended the regular season with 25 victories in their final 29 games.

And Reggie Miller is getting one last shot at the championship that has eluded him for 18 years when his Indiana Pacers open against the Celtics.

The focus is about to shift to the 16 teams that have managed some success, and at least half of them must be considered legitimate contenders to win it all.

"The one thing you know is that you never know," said New Jersey Nets coach Lawrence Frank, whose team was the last to qualify for the playoffs but might not be a pushover—they do have Jason Kidd, Vince Carter and Richard Jefferson—in their first-round matchup with the Heat. "Strange things happen in the playoffs." AP

Philsoc to formalize SEAG sponsor deals

By Musong R. Castillo

THE BULK of sponsorships for the coming Philippine Southeast Asian Games will be signed Wednesday next week, according to Philsoc honchos Obet Pagdanganan and Jose "Peping" Cojuangco.

The sponsorships by telecommunications giants Globe Telecoms and PLDT as well as the gold package availed by several Lucio Tan companies will be inked on the said day.

"Yes, we will be able to raise the minimum amount (needed to host the Games)," Pagdanganan, CEO of the Philsoc, told scribes after the Philippine Press Institute Forum at the Diamond Hotel yesterday.

"Our budget is very flexible," Pagdanganan added. "What is important is for us to be able to host the best SEA Games ever."

The Philsoc would need at least P800 million to host the Games, the third such time for the country after the 1981 and 1991 editions, and Pagdanganan minced no words in saying that this would be the best of all.

Globe had secured the first gold package, the controversial P100-million packet that locked industry rival Smart out of the sponsorship picture.

"That was the first gold (package) and certainly won't be the last," Pagdanganan said, though he refused to confirm or deny whether PLDT, the flagship company of Smart, will be availing of the same deal.

Philsoc COO Cojuangco, on the other hand, did confirm that the Lucio Tan conglomerate also secured a gold deal, though he admitted that a huge part of this will not be cash-based.

Tan's companies have agreed to supply the Games with water, free airline and hotel accommodations for officials of some of the events who will be flown over to make the SEAG a legitimate international event.

"Equestrian alone requires the presence of 24 officials coming from all over Europe," Cojuangco, also the equestrian president, said. "We now have that taken care of and it will not anymore come from the coffers of the Games.

"We are proud of the way things are going."

The signing of the sponsorships will come at the right time, since the next and last meeting of the SEAG Federation Council will be held on April 28-30 at the Hyatt.

This meeting will determine the real number of events to be played in the Games where the country is aiming to win no less than the overall championship.

Diay says athletes need not do odd jobs

LYDIA de Vega-Mercado laments the fact that the days when she and Elma Muros-Posadas (back) dominated the Asian track scene have faded into memory. PDI PHOTO

By Musong R. Castillo

LYDIA de Vega-Mercado yesterday said the Philippines needs more dedicated athletes who don't have to go around doing odd jobs in order to make both ends meet.

"It's very sad, but being an athlete is often just the second choice for some of our athletes today," De Vega, pretty as ever and looking quite fit, told the Philippine Press Institute national forum yesterday.

The former Asian sprint queen also decried the fact that nobody has taken over her throne after all these years.

"Maybe she hasn't been born yet," she said. "*Nakakalungkot nga, kasi hanggang ngayon, wala pa ring pumapalit kay* Lydia de Vega (It's sad because up to now, we have not found the next Lydia de Vega)."

She said there are many young aspirants dreaming of following in her footsteps.

"But we need to support them every way we can," she stressed.

Unlike 38-year-old Elma Muros-Posadas who last week came out of retirement to top the 100-m dash in the Milo National Open, Diay is not contemplating on lacing her running shoes again.

"*Masarap isipin bumalik, para makatulong ulit sa bansa* (It's nice to think about a comeback, to help the country)," De Vega, who still holds the SEAG 100-m record of 11.28 seconds, said. "*Pero di ko na kaya* (But I don't think I can do it)."

The Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association had declared that athletics will be targeting 15 gold medals in the coming Southeast Asian Games.

However, De Vega, whose career netted a total of two Asian Games gold medals, nine SEAG gold and two silver medals, and four 4As sprint championships, feels that talking of 15 gold medals with no dominating talent around could just be too much.

"Everyone is hoping that 15 would reachable," De Vega said. "Hoping is the word. *Di pa natin alam yan sa ngayon* (We can't really say at this time)."

Malolos hosts boxing tourney

THE AMATEUR Boxing Association of the Philippines (Abap), in cooperation with Touch Mobile, resumes its grassroots development program by resurrecting its boxing competitions on wheels.

The program, now to be known the Touch Mobile Go-for-Gold, will have its first stop in Barangay Pamarawan in Malolos, Bulacan, Saturday with Mayor Danilo Domingo hosting a 12-bout card, including seven in the Abap program. The fights will be aired on NBN 4 every Saturday from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Two women bouts will spice up the card starting at 3 p.m. with Davao City boxers going up against fighters from the Philippine Navy.

"The Abap is grateful for Touch Mobile for backing this program which sorely missed support," said Abap president Manny T. Lopez. "We are now assured of continuing a program that has produced the likes of Roel and Onyok Velasco, Bobby Jalnaiz, the Lerio brothers and Harry Tañamor, as well as most of the members of the national training pool today."

Five other special bouts, including the flyweight duel between Annie Albania of South Cotabato and Analiza Cruz of Mindoro, and the featherweight meeting between Angelita Bautista of the Navy and Jhoren dela Rosa of Far Eastern University, are on tap.

Seeing action for Davao are pinweight Frederick dela Rosa, light flyweight Lordremen Bautista, flyweight Argie Laput, bantamweight Rex Berme Diamale, featherweight Alexis Diamale, lightweight Marlon Borja and light welterweight Mike Merafuentes.

The Navy fighters include ASNs Rodel Navares, Joel Rafols and Ruben Traza; SN1s Gary Lastrella and Salvador Tizon; PFCb Bernabe Concepcion, and Roel Laguna.

Schumacher drives extra laps

IMOLA, Italy—Michael Schumacher stayed on the track longer than usual and posted the fourth-fastest time in Friday's first practice session for the San Marino Grand Prix.

The seven-time Formula One champion, under pressure to make up a 24-point gap behind Renault leader Fernando Alonso, completed 14 laps, more than any other top driver.

Alonso and Renault teammate Giancarlo Fisichella completed only two laps each and did not post any times in a strategic move to save their engines for the rest of the weekend.

McLaren-Mercedes' third driver, Pedro de la Rosa, was the fastest around the Enzo and Dino Ferrari circuit in 1 minute, 21.060 seconds.

Toyota's reserve driver, Ricardo Zonta, was second in 1:21.174, followed by BAR Honda's Jenson Button in 1:21.805 and Schumacher at 1:22.085.

Third drivers such as De la Rosa and Zonta usually post fast practice times as they are not under the same engine restrictions as top drivers.

De la Rosa finished fifth in the Bahrain GP three weeks ago as a substitute for Juan Pablo Montoya. Montoya is still out with a shoulder injury, but De la Rosa has been demoted to a reserve role this weekend in favor of Alexander Wurz. AP

SPORTSWATCH

Three men lead TM Kid race

THREE provincial bets lead the race for the TM (Taco Master) Kid award, a side event of the TM 9-Ball Champions League. Melvin Lazaro of Batangas City currently tops all Taco Masters with 25 points, a point ahead of closest pursuer Jundel Mason of Team Cavite. Allan Soliman of Team Pampanga is at third with 22 points. TM 9-Ball Champions League founder Ramon Tuason and Touch Mobile brand manager Norman Miranda put up the side event to the main competition. The first ever truly regional and grassroots league, sponsored by Touch Mobile, Accel and Brunswick will be televised every Thursday and Friday at 9:30 p.m. starting April 28. The show will be aptly called TM 9-Ball, Ang Bagong Sibol and will have a trick shot and instructional segment. SM Supermall in Dasmariñas, Cavite, will host next Monday's games which will be held from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

eTelecare badminton stakes P100,000

THE TWO-DAY Alumni Open Meet of the eTelecare Collegiate and Alumni Invitational Badminton Cup 2005 kicks off today at the PowerSmash Badminton Courts in Makati City. The Alumni Open Meet is open to all non-varsity alumni of colleges and universities nationwide. Participants will compete in men's doubles, ladies' doubles, and mixed doubles events. Up to P100,000 worth of cash prizes and gifts await the winners. The eTelecare Cup is organized by eTelecare Global Solutions, the world's most awarded and largest Asia-based call center company, in partnership with the Philippine Badminton Association, Prince Badminton and Addict Mobile Prepaid. For details, call 282-2449, 0922-3013220 or 0920-9083529.

Global run gets adidas support

THE BONIFACIO Global City Summer Run slated on April 24 in Taguig City gets a big boost with adidas participating as its major sponsor. The run, organized by Fort Bonifacio Development Corporation (FBDC), is part of the ongoing Bonifacio Global City Summer Festival and will have competition in the 10K, 5K and 3K distances. To date, over 500 runners are entered with the registration deadline set for April 20. Registration fee is P150. Registration center is at the ground floor of the Vasquez Madrigal Plaza at 51 Annapolis Street in Greenhills, San Juan. For further inquiries, call the FBDC office at 751-6115.

Trans sport highlights Porsche GT-2

TRANS Sport Show, the country's longest running motoring event formally opened yesterday and will run until tomorrow, from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. On display is a ready-to-race Porsche GT-2 powered by a twin turbo 3.6-liter flat six engine. Organized by TradeShow International (TSI), Trans Sport Show has several sports and racing cars on display. The show actively supports the continued growth of motor sport racing in the country. More than 50 restored show cars will vie for the much coveted "Best of Show" award.

Leukemic kids join Sports for LIFE

SOME 100 poor children afflicted with leukemia and other life-threatening blood disorders will participate in "Sports for LIFE," a mini-Olympic event staged annually by Leukemic Indigents Fund Endowment Inc. (LIFE), tomorrow at the Picnic Grove of the Quezon Memorial Circle, Elliptical Road, Quezon City. Dubbed "Pistang Palaro," the mini-Olympics will be highlighted by the lighting of the Sports for LIFE flame. LIFE was established by doctors, patients and friends in 1995 to assist indigent leukemic children achieve remission and cure through optimum medical, material, psychosocial and spiritual care in the hope of giving the children a chance to live normal lives.

Cordero holds basketball clinic

BALL Zone, a skills development program of former professional basketball player Ed Cordero, will hold another basketball clinic on April 24 to May 10 at the Meralco Gym in Ortigas Avenue, Pasig City. Sponsored by Star Margarine and Purefoods Tender Juicy Hotdogs, the clinic will run from 8 to 11:30 a.m. every Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday. For details, text or call 0918-8833267; 534-2181, or e-mail ballzone54@yahoo.com.

3-cock tilt schedules 50 fights

OVER 50 fights are scheduled in another special 3-cock derby at 7 p.m. tonight at the Las Piñas Coliseum. Submission of entries is until 2 p.m. and interested parties may call 873-1040, 874-3910 and 0926-7450375. Sagupaan Complexor 3000 is the sponsor. Meanwhile, regular hackfights are being held at LPC from Monday to Sunday. The No Entry Fee One Cock Ulutan with a guaranteed prize of P10,000 is slated every Thursday. Meanwhile, the GCAP executive committee announced the staging of the Big Event Part II 6-Cock Derby on May 14.

P1-M Roligon derby tonight

THE LAST day of eliminations of the P1-Million Ratratan 4-Cock Derby will be staged at Roligon Mega Cockpit beginning at 7 p.m. tonight. The guaranteed prize at stake is a whopping P1 million, but the entry fee is only P3,300. Elimination rounds were already held in different cockpits. All two-pointers will face one another during the championship round on Monday also at Roligon. Meanwhile, 30 participants are seeing action in the upcoming Mitra Cup 4-Cock Derby on Wednesday, April 27, according to derby hosts Rep. Baham Mitra and Dado Mitra. For inquiries, call 833-2275 and 833-1638.

PLANET Sports Inc. welcomes runners to the first New Balance Power Race running clinic recently. The running clinic continues this Sunday and on May 1 with the culminating run slated at the Glorietta activity center in Makati City on May 7.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Highlands, Sta. Elena inch closer to Fed League finals

DARKHORSE Tagaytay Highlands and fancied Sta. Elena moved on the brink of forging a title showdown after completing stirring 3-0 sweeps of their respective opponents Thursday in the semifinals of the 2005 Ladies Federation Golf League.

The Highlanders, seeded fourth, won all its matches against host and top seed Orchard while No. 2 Sta. Elena was just as merciless in sweeping a visiting Manila Southwoods, ranked third, in the first half of the home-and-away Final Four duels.

Both Tagaytay and Sta. Elena need just half a point in the return matches to barge into the finals sponsored by Prudential Bank, Justine Sebastian/Cathay Land Inc., Citibank NA and Schering Plough-Coppertone.

Tagaytay was to host Orchard at its Midlands course yesterday. Sta. Elena visits Manila Southwoods today.

Maline Flores and club champion Veronica Veloso started the Tagaytay rampage with a 2-up win over Nila Patricio-Ninja Ivanovic in the alternate shots.

Top jungolfer Debbie de Villa and Dionee Cu clinched the win for Tagaytay with a 3-and-2 decision of Helen Kim-Greeley Oposa in high-low before Len Yaptangco-Princess Katigbak iced the victory with their 2-up conquest of Marissa Romano-Makiko Okuno in the aggregate format.

Therese Dabao and Candice Yulo earned the first point for Sta. Elena by disposing of high-low rivals Claire Ong-Marissa Sison with a three-hole lead on the 16th.

Marilen Bantug-Nancy Co secured the win for Sta. Elena by taking the foursomes against Lilia Paterno-Connie Campos. Not to be outdone, Olive Reyes-Angie Co delivered the crunching sweep for their team by winning over Orchard's Florence Okiyama-Heidi Shetkat in aggregate play.

Winners of the semis will clash for the title in another home-and-away series next week.

ILOCOS GAMES
Guest of honor First Gentleman Mike Arroyo (second from left) sings the national anthem during the launch of the 2005 Ilocos Region Athletic Association meet at the Marcos Sports Stadium in Laoag City recently. Arroyo is flanked by (from left) Michael Keon, provincial board member and sports consultant who is also the national training director of the Philippine Sports Commission, Ilocos Norte Gov. Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and PSC officer-in-charge Butch Ramirez.

Manila Seahawks fish 27 golds, move ahead

By Marc Anthony Reyes

IN ONE fell swoop, Manila Seahawks fished an astonishing 27 gold medals in the swimming pool yesterday to surge ahead in the overall medal standings at the 4th Manila Youth Games at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex.

The medal assault left the competition in tatters as the Pandacan-based squad took over the top from erstwhile leader Jose Abad Santos High with a 27 gold, 14 silver and 11 bronze haul.

JASHS, which struck heavily in events like gymnastics earlier yesterday, had a 16-6-5 harvest, but is trailed very closely by Philippine Columbian Association which also thrived in the pool with a 15-19-11 tally. Barrio Obrero Elementary is third with 12-4-7.

Barangay 659 grabbed its share of pool honors with 11 golds, three silvers and two bronzes to be in fourth overall, while Dapitan Whales followed in fifth with 5-9-15.

Elijah Cruz, Lea Navato and Gaston Beloso led the Seahawks' charge by taking two golds apiece in the week-long meet organized by the Manila Sports Council.

Judith Cruz broke the 100-meter freestyle mark in the 9-10 age class with a time of one minute and 9.13 seconds. She eclipsed her old mark of 1:10.94.

Navato clinched gold medals in the 13-14 girls' 200m individual medley (2:49.22) and the 100m freestyle (1:08.84), while Cruz dominated the 11-12 boys' free (1:10.34) and the 100m breaststroke (1:31.53). Beloso topped the 100m free for boys 8-under (1:26.77) and the 50m breast (48.75).

Among those who bagged golds in the morning events for the Seahawks were Tessa Alcantara in the 15-17 200m individual medley (2:44.97), Mikee Bartolome in the 8-under 200m IM (3:31.62), Inah Enolva in the 8-under 100m free (1:36.85) and Joana Bagat in the 13-14 100m breast (1:2.97).

Mandapat-Espinosa pace CJH Invt'l golf

BAGUIO CITY—The Bong Mandapat-Elias Espinosa team exploited their familiarity with the course to take command in Group 1 action halfway through the third CJH Invitational tournament at the Camp John Hay Golf Club here.

The duo scored 53 points under the Scramble format over the par-69, 6,001-yard championship course, two ahead of the pair of Jimmy Borromeo and Thirdy Escaño who returned a 55.

Running third with 58s were the partnerships of Shean Bedi and Jigs Mendoza and Danilo Tenefrancia and Chester Calpotura.

Club chair Robert John Sobrepeña and partner Larry Tojino are six shots off the pace along with four other pairs.

Today's final round of the Invitational, which has Smart Communications as major sponsor and Wilson Sports as hole-in-one sponsor, will use the best ball format.

Le Chef, MRT, Golforce Inc., Camp John Hay Dev. Co., CJH Manor Hotel, Kork Inc., DHN Construction and Dev., and Splash Island are also supporting the two-man team, 36-hole competition.

Arthuro and Mario Villasan posted 54 points to show the way in Group II, with Bobby Legaspi-Ricky Velasco and Favian Tolete-Flor Fajilan second with 56s.

The lady team-up of Lilibeth Ratcliffe and Sonia Bruce produced 52 points to stay in front in Group III. Frank Ratcliffe and Perry Galuba had 54 while Ronald Cosalan and Melvin Mendoza scored 55 to be in second and third places.

Dawal, Alejo capture titles

PAOLO Dawal of Bulacan and Pavielle Alejo of Nueva Ecija-UST came up with thrilling three-set victories to cop the men's and ladies' crowns in the elite division of the first JVC Regional Badminton Championships at the Excel Badminton Center in San Fernando, Pampanga, yesterday.

Dawal wore down Gabriel Villanueva of Guagua National College in the deciding set to tally a 15-13, 10-15, 5-11 victory, while Alejo recovered from a first-set setback then hung tough in an extended third set duel to fashion out a 4-11, 11-6, 13-11 triumph over Erma Galario of Pozorrubio.

Dawal and Alejo won P5,000 each for their efforts and took home a pair of JVC DVDs, courtesy of the sponsoring JVC (Phils.) Inc.

Cebu will host the second leg of the four-stage circuit April 26-29 at the Metro Sports Badminton Club in Salinas Drive, Lahug, Cebu City. For details, contact (032)233-3338/(032)234-4526.

Joining Dawal and Alejo on the winner's podium were Adrian Pagsanjan and Liza Encarnacion of Golden Shuttle Foundation, who trounced their respective rivals to pocket the titles in the juniors 16-under division of the tournament backed by Gosen, Cebu Pacific, Water Front Hotels, Lactacyd and Accel, and organized by IMG.

Pagsanjan fought back from an opening-set loss to dominate Alex Callanta, also of GSF, for an 11-15, 15-4, 15-1 victory in the boys' finals.

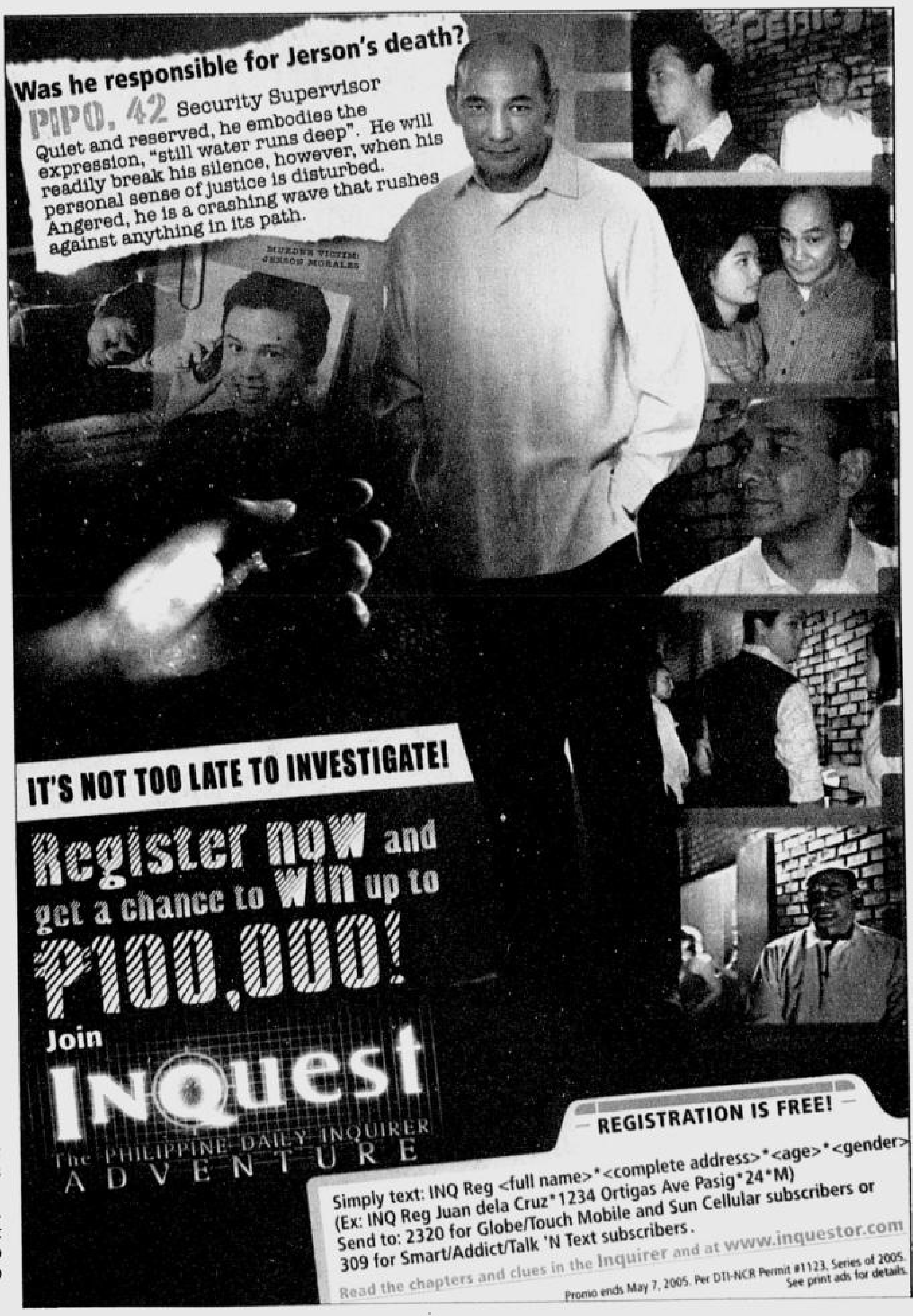
Earlier, Encarnacion overwhelmed teammate Carla Lizardo, 11-6, 11-8, for the girls' crown. They teamed up later to beat the Jackily Cudia-Chona Medina tandem from Marcelo H. Del Pilar, 15-6, 15-6, and bag the doubles crown. Encarnacion and Pagsanjan won P3,000 each.

Mild Seven F1 Club eyes No. 4

WITH the Mild Seven Renault F1 team's fantastic winning streak of three consecutive races, the F1 community is eager to see if the dream start will be extended in this Sunday's San Marino GP, starting at 7 p.m.

The Mild Seven F1 Club will bear witness to the start of the European F1 GPs in two venues, the great kart place in Speedzone at Fort Bonifacio and the PHI Resto Bar at Metrowalk in Ortigas Center, where the races will be seen live on wide-screen projectors.

The Mild Seven F1 Club is sponsored by Mild Seven, Speedzone, PHI Resto Bar, Comfort Zone, Puma footwear and apparel, JVC, Top Gear, MP Turbo and Speed, with official radio stations Joey 92.3 and Monster RX 93.1 FM.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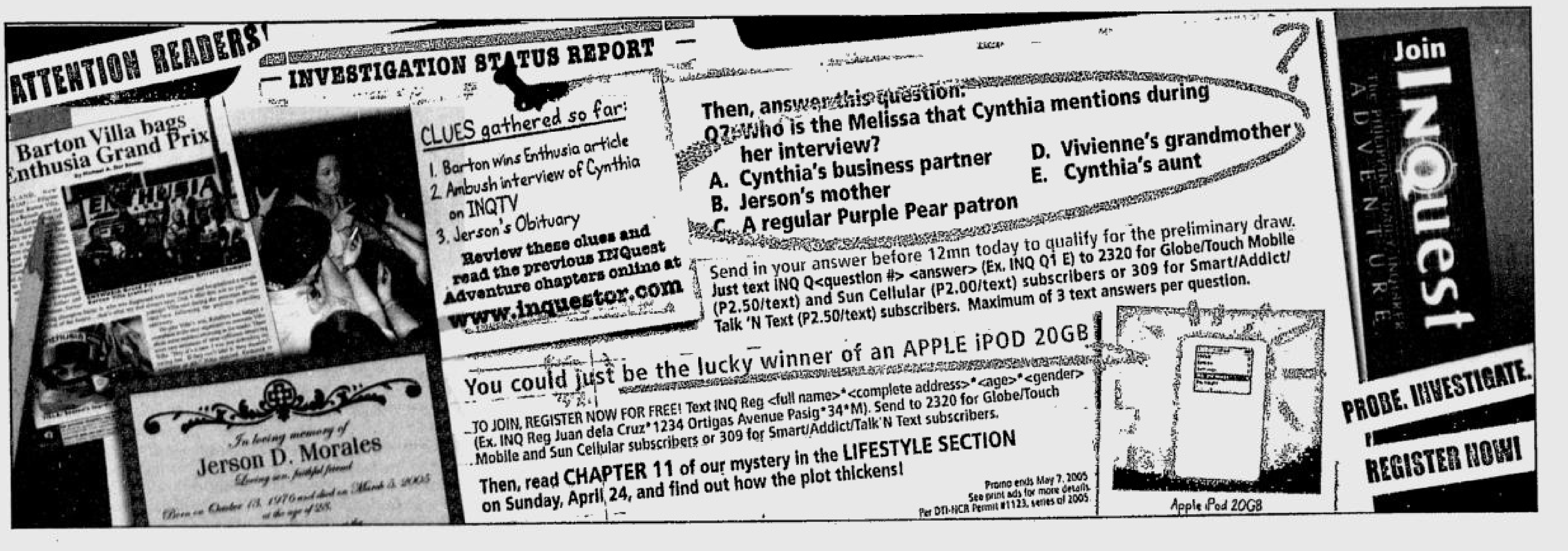
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SPORTS

Cebu active chess lures strong field

CEBU CITY—Grandmasters Eugene Torre, Joey Antonio and Nelson Mariano and world's top ranked International Master Mark Paragua are the favorites in the Filway/Time Life Open Active Chess Championships Visayas leg which starts today at the SM City-Cebu here.

Also expected to contend for the P30,000 champion's purse are Davao leg titlist IM Ildefonso Datu and Cebuano chess wizards IM Richard Bitoon, fresh from topping the Atty. Borjal memorial open, IM Barlo Nadera and former National Junior champion NM Elwin Retanal.

Manila leg champion IM Ronald Bancod will miss the tournament.

"It's rare that the local top players meet in an open event," said Torre. "This nationwide (Manila-Davao-Cebu) tournaments are a good venue to discover new talents, especially from Visayas and Mindanao.

The tournament sponsored by Filway Marketing president/CEO Hector "Chito" O. Tagaysay will start at 10 a.m. and will end tomorrow. It is divided into the Open, Women's, Boys 12-under and Girls 12-under divisions.

Sanctioned by the National Chess Federation of the Philippines, the event also offers P10,000 to the Women's champion and P4,000 each to the Boys 12-under and Girls 12-under champions.

Call Wilfredo "Willie" Abalos at 0921-6219898 and Sunstar Cebu sports editor Giovanni Tabada at 0918-6714464 for details.

NM Marlon Bernardino

TORRE: Top contender LEONCIO G. BALBIN JR

FROM left, Darwin Banez of Panasonic, Bacoor vice mayor Edwin Malvar, NBV president Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla, NBC sec-gen Tito Palma, Anjo Yllana, Molten's Anil Buxani, NBC chair Louie Kierulf and Bayview Park director of sales and marketing Marie Jean Cordero put their hands on the ball as they all bat for NBC's success.

Panasonic-NBC tilt starts today

Jets versus Laguna Spring

SPRING Cooking Oil-backed Laguna Spring battles expansion team Parañaque Jets today as the 2005 Panasonic-NBC national basketball championship unwraps at 4 p.m. at the Cuneta Astrodome.

The Jets of Parañaque vice mayor and movie actor/TV host Anjo Yllana, who created a big stir by shocking the RP-Cebuana Lhuillier team in a recent NBC pre-season series, are expected to have their hands full against the Spring of NBC president Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla and Laguna Gov. Teresita "Ningning" Lazaro in the lone game set after the colorful opening ceremony.

Popular singer/TV host Janno Gibbs and Sexbomb dancers Rochelle, Jopay, Izzy and Weng will provide live entertainment while Roselle Nava will sing the national anthem.

Commissioner Joey Y. Mundo of the Philippine Sports Commission will be guest speaker. Other special guests include Padilla, Panasonic Philippines president Rodolfo Perez and the owners of all participating teams.

The opening of the tourney sponsored by Panasonic, Sulpicio Lines, Cebu Pacific, Philtranco, Accel, Molten, Nature's Spring, Ping Ping Lechon, Bayview Park and Holiday Plaza-Cebu will be telecast on NBN 4 at 4 p.m. tomorrow and Prime Channel at 9 tonight with replays on Sunday (10 a.m.) and Monday (2 p.m.).

Former Red Bull players Bong Alvarez, Rolly Basilides and Jovy Sese, pre-season MVP Nino Marquez and slotman Larry Rodriguez are expected to lead the Jets, who will suit up for the first time actors Richard Gomez, Jomari Yllana, Wendell Ramos and Antonio Aquitania.

Other stars of Coach Jun da Jose are Erick Araman, Arden Guiyab and Jhayson Alminario.

Coach Vic "Rambo" Sanchez's Spring will bank on Robin Mendoza, Rodel Manuel, Mar Reyes, Chris Corbin, Marlon Kalaw, Val Domingo, Sonny Manucat and Rodel Mallari.

Other teams in the tourney are Mayor Freddie Tinga's Forward Taguig, Baguio Cardinals, Cavite Insurers, defending champion Tribu Sugbu, Ozamiz Colta, Cagayan de Oro Stars, Iloilo Warriors, Valencia Golden Harvest, Iligan City Crusaders, Zamboanga del Norte and guest squad RP-Cebuana Lhuillier.

ASIAN FORMULA 3

RP racers seek redemption

THE PHILIPPINE contingent will seek redemption in the third and fourth legs of the Asian Formula 3 series in Zhuhai, China, on May 7-8 after a bad start in the first two stops of the circuit in Batangas two weeks ago.

Young guns Dado Pena and Tyson Sy, whose bids for podium finishes in Batangas were wrecked by car troubles and crashes, will again lead the Filipino riders against their foreign counterparts in the 12-leg year-long series.

Sy, carrying the colors of Speedtech Asia, faltered at the flag-off in the first leg, then figured in a multi-car crash in the next leg that denied him a podium finish in the April 8-9 opening legs of the circuit supported by Addict Mobile, Motolite, Boysen, Yokohama Tires, Lima City Hotel and PLDT MyPad (www.pldtmypad.com).

Peña, racing for Ambi Pur Team Goddard-Minardi Team Asia, finished fourth in the first leg but crashed out early in the next leg, enabling Ananda Mikola to initiate an Indonesian sweep.

Mikola, racing for Fastron Racing with Threebond, topped the first two legs of the international class while his countryman, Moreno Soeprapto, was just as unbeatable in the promotions class.

Tugade heads poker meet qualifiers

TYRELL R. Tugade, a 30-year-old business executive and poker player from Tahanan Village, Parañaque, leads 30 other semifinalists in the 1st leg of the Poker King Challenge Series.

The semifinals and finals are to be played today starting at 1 p.m. at the Airport Casino Filipino, Parañaque. The public is invited to watch the exciting competition involving quick decision making and mental toughness. Trophies and valuable prizes are to be awarded to the best players after the finals.

The qualifiers emerged after a five-hour session held at the Casino Filipino at Hyatt Hotel Manila involving 60 poker enthusiasts who registered in the first non-wager competition in the country organized by the Poker Club of the Philippines.

Ray "Butch" Gamboa, president of the PCP, said the club is organizing six legs of the competition with the leg winners assured of berths in the Grand Finals scheduled in December.

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1ST FILIPINO-CHINESE BASKETBALL FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE
MIGHTY

PLAYERS and supporters of the Mighty Filter Kings pose after ruling the Filipino-Chinese Basketball Friendship League recently at the Arellano gym.

Filter Kings reign supreme

THE MIGHTY Filter Kings annexed their second straight title recently by topping the 1st Filipino-Chinese Basketball Friendship League at the Arellano Gym.

Drawing inspired plays from owner Cesar King, former La Salle player Rafa Dinglasan and Rejan Lee, the Mighty Kings beat PC R'Us squad, 95-86, a feat that proved their victory in the Alumni Association of Xavier Schools was no fluke.

The Filter Kings, mentored by Pat Aquino – team manager of Granny Goose Kornets in the PBL, ruled the 40-and-above division in the AAXS meet last month.

"I'm happy we made it again, it's a tough win," said King. "We did not expect to win this tournament but everybody contributed immensely to our victory."

Despite gaining extra weight, Dinglasan still proved to be deadly from beyond the arc as he knocked in eight three-point shots to lead the Mighty Kings with 26 points.

He was ably supported by Lee, a Xavier Tiong Lian standout who chipped in 20 points. Lee's brilliant all-around performance earned him the MVP plum in the tournament organized by the FCBFL headed by Chrius Cimares.

Joseph Chua and Raymond Lee also shone for the Filter Kings as they wound up with 20 and 16 points, respectively.

King, on the other hand, masterfully orchestrated the plays for the Kings.

Marikina Black tackles Gray

PACESETTING Marikina Black faces the challenge of Marikina Gray when the Global Destiny Basketball League eliminations resume today all over Metro Manila.

Marikina Black, sporting a clean 6-0 record, tackles the Gray basketeers (4-0) at 1 p.m. at the Barangay Barangka Gym in Marikina City in the event backed by Solid Video, Sony Philippines and MyDestiny cable internet.

Valenzuela Light Blue (8-0) is also expected to be tested by Valenzuela Red (6-1) when the two teams clash at 1 p.m. at the Valenzuela Sports Complex in Barangay Maysan, Valenzuela City.

Over at the Barangay Sta. Lucia covered court, San Juan Orange stakes its unbeaten (5-0) slate against San Juan Light Blue at 1 p.m. in the event also backed by Regent Food and Molten balls.

Quezon City Blue (5-0) battles also-ran Quezon City Black (2-2) at 1:30 p.m. following the noon game between Quezon City Green and Red at the Amoranto Sports Complex in a pair of matches to be covered by the cable TV giant.

The games will be aired from noon to 2 p.m. daily over Global Kabayan Channel 3 with replays from 6 to 8 p.m. in this grassroots program endorsed by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, National Youth Commission and the Philippine Sports Commission.

E-mail: pr_saturday_special@inquirer.com.ph

SATURDAY Special

Editor **Nestor U. Torre**
Assistant Editor **Rito P. Asilo**

Text us your feedback: inquirer sat name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Latest album proves Rivermaya is here to stay

By Noelani Torre

IT'S good to be Rivermaya these days. After more than 10 years on the scene, the band remains as popular as ever—if not more so.

Proclaimed the Philippines' Favorite Artist in the recently-concluded MTV Asia Awards, they appear to be living up to their title. You see or hear them everywhere—from billboards to television, radio and even print ads.

Their road to success hasn't exactly been smooth. Rivermaya has gone through various member departures and reshufflings in the past decade. Originally composed of vocalist Bamboo Mañalac, guitarist Perf de Castro, bassist Nathan Azarcon, keyboardist Rico Blanco, and drummer Mark Escueta, the band is now made up of Blanco on vocals, Escueta on drums, Mike Elgar on guitars, and Japs Sergio on bass.

Vocalist

De Castro was the first to leave (he went on to form his own band, Triaxis), and he was replaced by Blanco. In 1998, vocalist Bamboo broke away and, with bassist Azarcon, eventually formed his own band, as well. Blanco carried on as vocalist, as first evinced in the band's fourth release, 1999's "It's Not Easy Being Green." The most recent leave-taker was guitarist Kakoi Legaspi, who went on to join Barbie's Cradle.

Rivermaya doesn't seem to have suffered from all of those departures. The band just forges on despite all the comings and goings. The latest example of this is the recent release of their "You'll Be Safe Here" EP, following hot on the heels of last year's "Between the Stars and Waves."

There are five tracks in this disc, though there are in fact *only* three songs—the other two are acoustic and "orchoustic" versions. It's a relatively sparse offering even for an EP, and it makes us wonder whether they forced the entire thing just so they could illustrate their new, lineup sans Legaspi.

The three songs here are the ubiquitous "You'll Be Safe Here" and "Liwanag Sa Dilim (Kaya Mo 'To)," and the new song, "Imbecilesque." The first two have been in heavy rotation in practically every radio station for some time now.

Chorus

"You'll Be Safe Here" is a sappy number, what with a chorus that goes: "Close your eyes/ Dry your tears/ 'Cause when nothing/ Seems clear/ You'll be safe here." Still, it's not sickeningly sweet, and the melody is catchy enough to explain the song's long shelf life.

Another mushy track is "Imbecilesque," with dipped-in-schmaltz lyrics like "'Cos I love you but I hurt you/ And though I wish that I could/ Make you smile/ There is nothing that I can do/ But send a little song/ Across the miles." It wouldn't have been too bad, however, *if* Blanco had sung it in tune.

As for "Liwanag Sa Dilim," those who are slightly older among us will remember it to be the "Awit ng Kabataan" of 10 years ago. Hook-laden and anthemic, this rousing song is an "updated" version, one that exhorts listeners to be a "*liwanag sa dilim*."

The acoustic and "orchoustic" versions don't really differ much from the studio originals, however, and in a playlist this brief, *that* makes them fillers. Let's just hope then that their next album has more to offer us.

RIVERMAYA. As popular as ever.

NINA. Soul and character.

Fresh takes on remakes

By Sharon Wendy A. Robas

IT'S been sometime since I last listened to a locally-produced album. With many talent-search winners waxing their respective albums these days, it's hard to choose which recording to listen to.

I settled on "Nina Live!" because although she's been around for sometime now, I haven't really listened to her songs—except when I heard them on TV or radio.

I found her 19-track selection attractive and interesting, consisting mostly of remakes of popular love songs such as "Stay (With Me)," "Burn," "Through the Fire," "Fall For You," "Steep," "I Can't Tell You Why," and "Piano in the Dark."

High notes

Nina's voice best suited the R&B tracks, but hearing her hit the high notes on a live recording was a delight. Her smooth rendition of Julia Fordham's "Love Moves in Mysterious Ways" was perfect for her vocal quality.

Nina also proved why she's called the "Soul Siren." She interpreted the songs with so much soul and character. Her youthful charm had something to do with it, too.

In Nina's duet with Christian Bautista, "Burn," her singing style complemented the tenor-pop voice of the fast-rising balladeer. Her versatility was evident when she shifted from slow tunes to fast numbers with ease.

Other notable tracks were her versions of Gloria Estefan's "Anything For You" and Celine Dion's "I Love You Goodbye." With only a guitar accompaniying her, Nina brought new life and emotion to Dion's popular love ditty.

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Asian emigre is Last Comic Standing

By Nestor U. Torre

DAT PHAN. Wore his heart on his sleeve.

THE SEARCH for new comedians, "Last Comic Standing," held its finals last week, and chose a most unexpected winner. Most of the finalists were white or black Americans, and yet the victor turned out to be the only Asian in the group, a Vietnamese emigre named Dat Phan.

Huge surprise

This was a huge surprise, because stand-up comedy was created by Americans, who are supposed to be the best in the world at this relatively new performance format.

Stand-up comedy is difficult for non-Americans to excel in because it generally requires the comic to address his audience directly with in-your-face jokes, comments and even insults, most of which are meant to elicit laughter of the outraged or cynical sort.

So, it was most unexpected that a "sweet" little Vietnamese would beat his white and black American competitors at their own game. His victory was made even more impressive by the fact that it was decided on by the text votes of the show's viewers, most of whom could be expected to be non-Asians.

What Phan's victory means is that he has been accepted and preferred by the general US TV audience, despite the fact that his jokes are not about the general American experience, but about the lives of Asians like himself in the land of milk, honey, money and Hollywood.

For such specialized subject matter to be deemed funnier and more telling than the usual stuff stand-up comics crack jokes about is downright revolutionary. How did Phan pull it off?

First, he wore his emigre heart on his sleeve, boldly admitting that he would be going off the beaten track with his ethnic humor, and making no apologies for it.

Painful candor

Next, he came up with truly insightful observations about his and his family's weird, cruel or zany experiences as unassimilated Asian-Americans in the States. In other words, he was truly funny and honest, and viewers must have appreciated his painful candor.

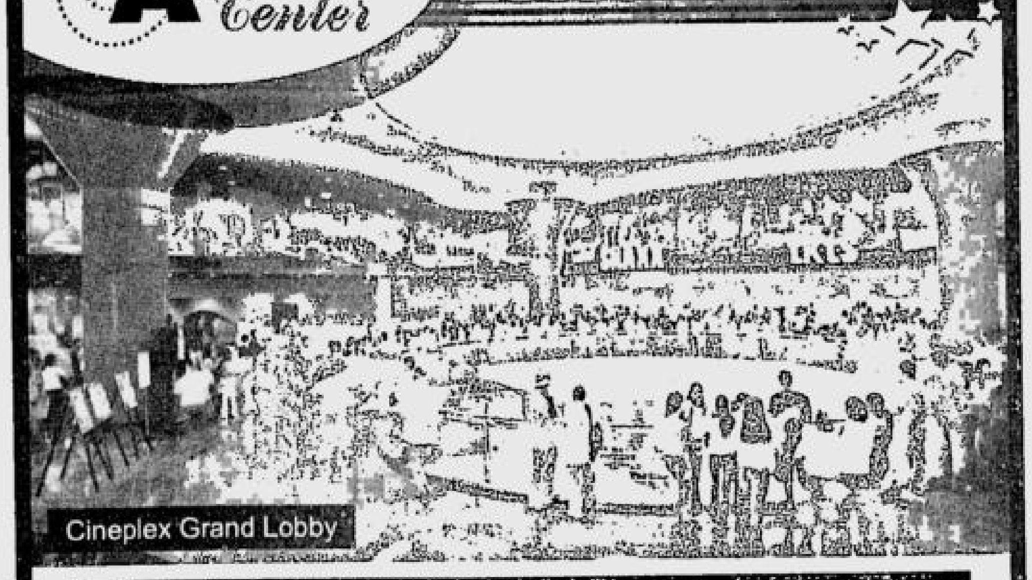
Third, he poked fun at *everybody*, including his mother—and himself. This readiness on his part to accept whatever he dished out for others clicked with his viewers, because it was "very American" of him not to ask for special consideration.

Finally, while Phan looked very Asian, his manner was exceedingly American, replete with the slang jargon and "in" references to US realities.

So, despite his ethnic material, American viewers could readily respond to his with-it performance, and empathized with his comedic complaints.

For these and other reasons, Vietnamese Dat Phan is now America's Last Comic Standing. His victory gifts him not just with a lot of career-building exposure on TV, but also with performance and recording contracts and a comedy special that could make him a star comic in no time at all. Way to go, Dat!

Araneta Center Leisure Guide



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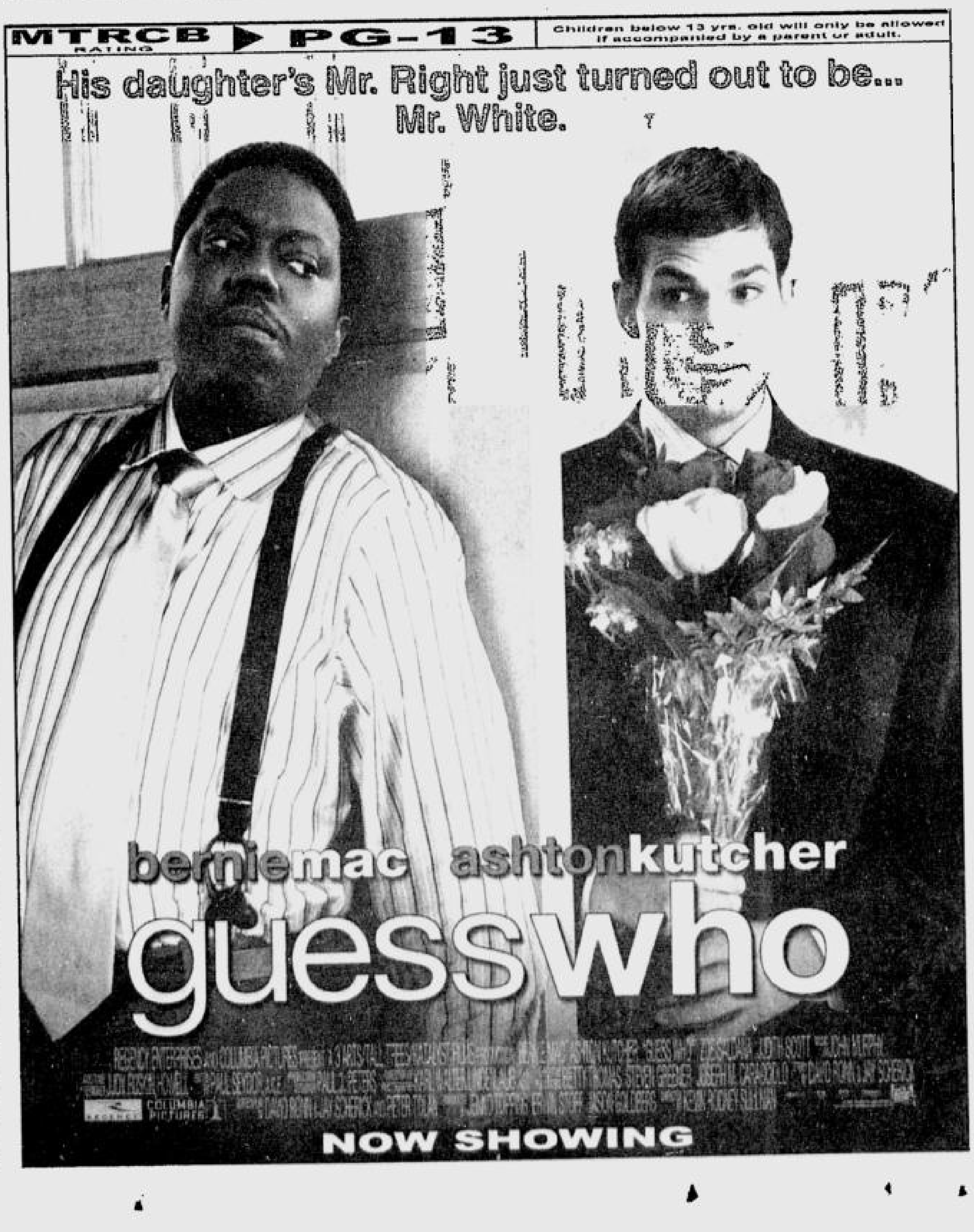
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Hollywood's funniest ladies compared

By Behn Cervantes

CAROLE Lombard intrigued me with her unique combination of sophistication, wit and humor. But she stood out among other screwball beauties like Imogene Coca and Lucille Ball. What was her magic?

Mae West was sophisticated and blonde but you had to be of a certain age to appreciate her abundant, in-your-face sex appeal. Her targets were boy toys or brainless muscular men. **Eve Arden** may have been funny and wry, but she was no great beauty.

Lucille Ball was a fantastic nut, but she was no **Kay Kendall**. The public knew that Ms Ball was no ninny when it came to business, because she set up Desilu Productions with Puerto Rican husband Desi Arnaz, and they emerged as important trendsetters on television. The wide-mouthed redhead was one of Hollywood's zaniest women.

Lanky brunette

Another Lombard wannabe was **Paula Prentiss**, a Northwestern drama graduate. She was a lanky brunette who sparked Hollywood interest in early MGM comedies like "Bachelor in Paradise." She won acclaim in Mike Nichols' "Catch 22."

Like Prentiss, other promising comediennes emerged, but no one came close to approximating Lombard's appeal.

Barbra Streisand, who ignited the screen as Fanny Brice in "Funny Girl," blossomed from doing slapstick comedies to powerful dramatic vehicles. She has become one of the most multi-awarded performers of all time, succeeding in all areas of the entertainment industry—as actress, singer, producer, composer and director!

Today, she is an industry icon, and she continues to take a strong social and political stand on vital issues.

Bette Midler broke through in the '70s, and is still wowing fans with her kookiness in films like "The First Wives' Club," "Hocus Pocus" and "Ruthless People." Like Streisand, she is versatile.

Combination

To my mind, however, the actress with the most impressive combination of comic talent, beauty, brains and style is **Shelley Long**. The savvy, long-limbed blonde did excellent work in "Money Pit" against the formidable Tom Hanks. In "Outrageous Fortune," she outmaneuvered Midler in their comic scenes. But, poor career choices have aborted the upward trajectory of an otherwise truly promising career.

Doris Day, for her part, was no doubt a delightful performer—as effective a singer as she was a dancer. She could do drama and comedy with equal ease. She was always the "girl-next-door" or the all-American beauty. Producer Ross Hunt spent good money to glamorize her in Rock Hudson starrers like "Pillow Talk." But, she didn't have the Lombard charisma.

I couldn't fathom the screwball but sophisticated appeal of Lombard until I saw "To Be or Not to Be." From her first entrance, Carole won you over to her side: She was funny, vibrant and sexy, and was capable of dishing out rapid dialogue with charming aplomb.

Now, I understood why her mystique lives beyond her time—along with the likes of James Dean, Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley.

STREISAND. From slapstick comedies to powerful dramatic vehicles.

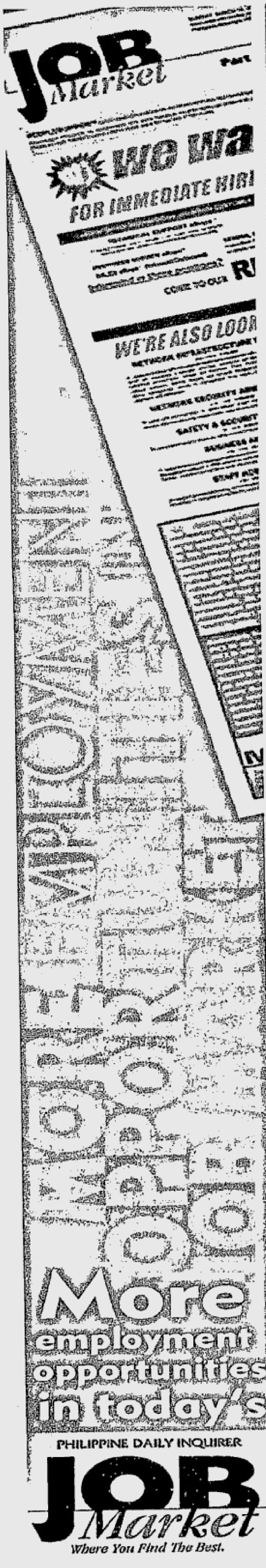
'Seinfeld' . . .

From page A2-4

and Elaine who hated men, but *wasn't* a lesbian.

After the show's ninth and final season, it was reported that Seinfeld was offered a whopping $200 million to go on with the show. The comedian is well-versed in making timely exits, however, and so "Seinfeld" ended with a bang: According to imdb.com, it's "one of only three series in American history to rank No. 1 in the ratings for its entire final season."

Luckily for us, reruns are still airing, and DVDs of the first four seasons have finally appeared in stores.



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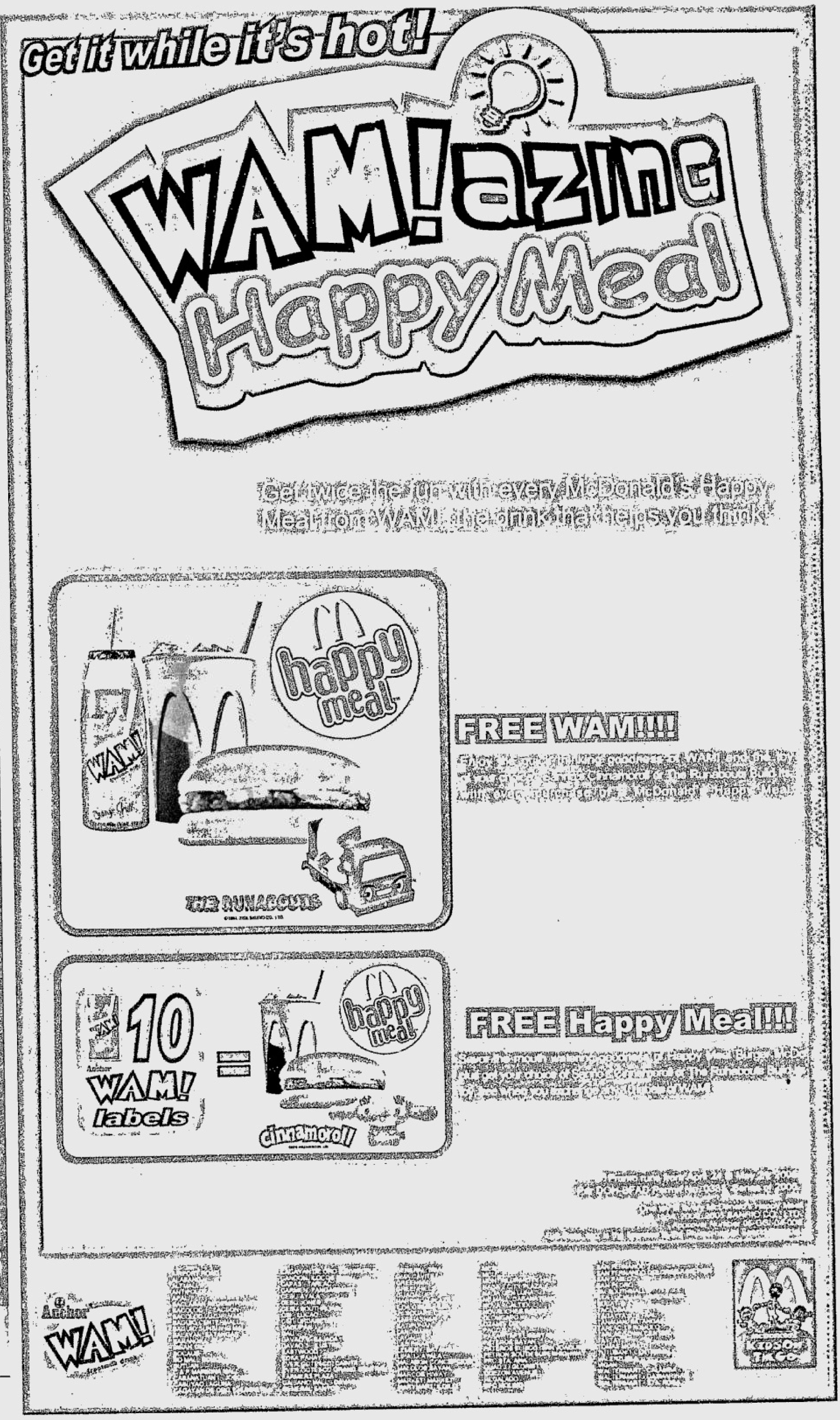

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9 RESERVED
10 THE INTERPRETER
11 GUESS WHO
12 THE WEDDING DATE

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6 SAHARA
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8 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
9 SAMARA: RING 2
10 FINDING NEVERLAND
11 THE PACIFIER
12 OK KA PARE KO

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9 SAMARA: RING 2
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8 SAHARA
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2 CLOSER
3 THE WEDDING DATE
4 SAMARA: RING 2

sm city bacoor
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2 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
3 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
4 SAMARA: RING 2
5 SAHARA
6 GUESS WHO
7 THE PACIFIER
8 OK KA PARE KO

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2 HIDE AND SEEK
3 CLOSER
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2 RESERVED
3 THE PACIFIER
4 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
5 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
6 SAMARA: RING 2
7 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
8 SAHARA

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3 BE COOL
4 THE PACIFIER
5 BOOGEYMAN
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7 RESERVED
8 SAMARA: RING 2

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'Wife Swap'

What happens when a New York heiress trades homes, husbands and children with a blue-collar woodcutter in New Jersey? "Wife Swap," the newest and hottest reality show, airs every Friday at 10:30 p.m. on the Hallmark Channel.

Maxene Magalona

Maxene Magalona topbills the new afternoon drama, "Saang Sulok ng Langit," fast becoming a fan favorite after one month on the tube. The show revolves around Maxene's character, Gemma, so the young actress is giving the role everything she's got.

BEDIONES. New direction.

'Spettacolo Pirotecnico'

On April 23, 30, May 14 and 21, Enchanted Kingdom invites you to "Spettacolo Pirotecnico," a grand fireworks and laser lights display that marks the popular theme park's 10th anniversary. Watch out, too, for the "StarStruck" Final Four and "Pinoy Pop Superstar" weekly winners as they perform in "Sun, Moon and Star" every Sunday of April and May. Magician Lou Hilario performs on April 23, 30 and May 14, 21.

Paolo Bediones

On May 21, Paolo Bediones dares to bare as he joins the underwear fashion sizzler, "The Carter Underwear Fashion Show," at Araneta Coliseum on May 21.

Daring comes naturally to Paolo, who's a sportsman at heart, and hosts two hot shows on TV—"Extra Challenge" and "S-Files." But baring is something new to him, and it took the Carter show to get him to take this new direction. The show is directed by Gerald "Yang" Grande.

Movies on TV

On HBO, April 23 at 9:40 a.m., "Changing Lanes." April 24 at 6 a.m., "Mack the Knife." 11:10 a.m., "The Emperor's Club." 1:05 p.m., "White Oleander." 8 p.m., "The Matrix Revolutions." 10:05 p.m., "Mystic River." April 25 at 12:45 p.m., "Little Nikita." April 26 at 10:50 p.m., "Anger Management." April 27 at 7:15 p.m., "City by the Sea."

On Cinemax, April 23 at 8:15 p.m., "The Long Island Incident." 4:15 p.m., "Music from Another Room." April 24 at 3:45 p.m., "Ghost." 10:30 p.m., "A League of Their Own." April 25 at 7:30 a.m., "Pal Joey." 2 p.m., "The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad." 6:45 p.m., "Truman." April 26 at 11:15 a.m., "Field of Dreams." 5:45 p.m., "Jason and the Argonauts." 12:20 a.m., "Perdita Durango." April 27 at 3:15 p.m., "Torn Curtain."

SEINFELD (FAR RIGHT) AND FRIENDS. Much ado about nothing—and everything.

'Seinfeld' is back

By Noelani Torre

WE were too young to fully appreciate the neurosis-based humor of "Seinfeld" when it first aired in the '90s. Now that they're airing reruns of the show from Wednesday to Sunday on the Entertainment Central channel, we finally understand how and why this sitcom about the everyday life of a standup comedian and his friends became one of the most-watched shows of the last decade.

The creation of Larry David and Jerry Seinfeld, "Seinfeld" first aired 16 years ago in 1989, and ended in 1998. It became one of the most popular shows on television and gained pop culture iconhood even before the series ended.

Development

It's difficult to calculate exactly how much "Seinfeld" has influenced the development of the sitcom. Famously known as a show "about nothing," it was obvious from the start that it definitely "had something."

In the end, folks concluded that its greatest appeal was that it would tackle anything and everything, no matter how seemingly prosaic or politically incorrect it was, and in unconventional ways.

Based partly on the life of Seinfeld himself, the series spotlighted the mundane and strange goings-on in his fictional life and in the lives of his three apartment-crashing friends—George Costanza, Cosmo Kramer, and Elaine Benes—played respectively by Jason Alexander, Michael Richards, and Julia Louis-Dreyfus.

Comic gifts

The cast of "Seinfeld" is as multi-awarded as the show itself. All those prizes were testaments to the comic gifts of the cast. If you've watched TV in the last 15 years, we don't have to tell you about the germ and body odor-conscious Seinfeld, the luckless George, the eccentric Kramer

"SEINFELD"/ A2-3

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MTRCB. PG-13
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④ SPONGEBOB (GP)
1:20, 3.20, 5:20
SAHARA (PG-13)
7:20, 10:00
PREMIERE THEATRE RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
MTRCB. PG-13 12:40, 3:30, 6:20, 9.10
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1 WEDDING DATE
11:10, 1:30, 3:50
6:10, 8:30, 10:50
PG-13
2 THE INTERPRETER
12:05, 2:55, 5:45
8:35, 11:10
PG-13
3 GUESS WHO?
12:35, 3:10, 5:45
8:20, 10:50
PG-13
4 THE JACKET
10:45, 1:15, 3:45
6:15, 8:45, 11:10

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SAHARA PG13 12:15,2:45,5:15,7:45,10:20	GUESS WHO PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50,10:15	RING OF THE NIBELUNGS PG13 12:15,2:45,5:15,7:45,10:20
WEDDING DATE PG13 12:00,2:00,4:00, 6:00,8:00,10:00	THE JACKET PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50,10:10	THE INTERPRETER PG13 12:15,2:45,5:15,7:45,10:30

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GALLERIA
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1 SAHARA • THX
1:45 4:30 7:15 10:00

2 GUESS WHO?
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

3 THE INTERPRETER
11:20 2:00 4:40 7:20 10:00

4 THE JACKET
11:15 1:25 3:35 5:45 7:55 10:00

5 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
10:40 1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00

6 THE WEDDING DATE
11:10 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00

7 PARAISO
1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00

8 BOSO
12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8:00 10:00

9 SAMARA RING 2
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

10 THE PACIFIER
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

ERMITA
536-7809 to 12

1 THE INTERPRETER
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

2 SAHARA
11:10 1:50 4:30 7:10 9:50

3 GUESS WHO?
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

4 THE WEDDING DATE
10:20 12:15 2:10 4:05 6:00 7:55 10:00

5 THE JACKET
10:40 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50

6 BOSO
10:40 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:20 9:40

7 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
11:10 1:50 4:25 7:00 9.40

METRO EAST
682-8193 • 682-8199

1 PARAISO
11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00

2 SAHARA
12:30 3:20 6:10 9:00

3 THE WEDDING DATE
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10

4 SAMARA RING 2
11:20 1:40 4.00 6:30 9:00

5 GUESS WHO?
11:50 2:30 5:10 7:50 10:30

6 THE JACKET
12:30 3:00 5:30 8:00 10:30

7 THE INTERPRETER
11:50 2:30 5:10 7:50 10:30

8 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
10:55 1:50 4:45 7:40 10:30

NOVALICHES
[illegible]

1 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
11:50 2:40 5.30 8.20

2 THE INTERPRETER
11:50 2:40 5:30 8:25

3 PARAISO
10:15 12:25 2:35 4:45 6:55 9:00

4 THE JACKET
11:00 1:20 3:40 6:00 8:20

5 GUESS WHO?
11:20 12.50 3:20 5:50 8:25

6 SAHARA
11:50 2:40 5:30 8.25

7 RESERVE

8 RESERVE

PIONEER
[illegible]

1 SAHARA
2 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
3 GUESS WHO
4 THE INTERPRETER

CITISQUARE MALABON
[illegible]

1 ASTERIX AND OBELIX
2 HIDE AND SEEK
3 BOOGEYMAN
4 PARAISO

CAINTA
[illegible]

1 THE INTERPRETER
2 GUESS WHO?
3 SAHARA
4 THE WEDDING DATE

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2 BE COOL
3 BIRTH
4 SAMARA RING 2
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3 PARAISO
4 BUNSHINSABA
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2 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
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3 BOOGEYMAN
4 ONG BAK
5 OKAY KA PARE KO
6 SAHARA

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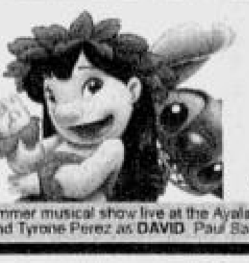

AYALA CENTER
April 21 & 22 6:30 pm
April 23 & 24 11:30 am, 3pm & 6pm
Glorietta Activity Center

ALABANG TOWN CENTER
April 29, 30 & May 1
3pm & 6pm
Activity Center

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Activity Center

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G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 THE JACKET	2 THE WEDDING DATE	3 THX THE INTERPRETER GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 SAHARA	5 RING OF NIBELUNGS	6 GUESS WHO	7 SAMARA (RING 2)
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 THE INTERPRETER	2 GUESS WHO		
GB3 GREENBELT 1	1 THX THE INTERPRETER GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX GUESS WHO GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 FINDING NEVERLAND GUARANTEED SEATS	4 THE WEDDING DATE GUARANTEED SEATS	5 THE JACKET GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX GUESS WHO	2 THE INTERPRETER		
	3 THE JACKET	4 RING OF NIBELUNGS	5 THE WEDDING DATE	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 HIDE & SEEK	2 THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS	3 MILLION DOLLAR BABY	4 CLOSER

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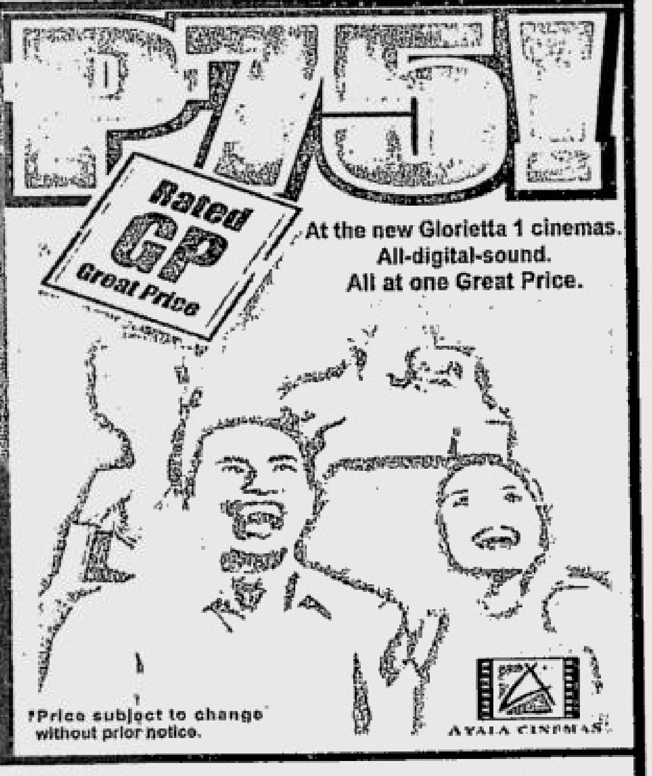

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① Samara (Ring 2)
② Wedding Date
③ Sahara
④ Ring of Nibelungs

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⑤ The Jacket
⑥ The Interpreter
⑦ Guess Who

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Activity Center

Star group of cinemas movie guide
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3 Paraiso
4 Legendary Street Fighter
5 Sahara
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Metropolis Alabang Star
Tel. No. 850.42.85
1 The Jacket
2 Paraiso
3 Under Renovation
4 Under Renovation
5 Ring of Nibelungs
6 Sahara

Starmall Las Pinas
Tel. No. 874.43.99
1 Gymkwando
2 Rental Reservation
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(STAR OF TERMINATOR 3)

RING OF THE NIBELUNGS

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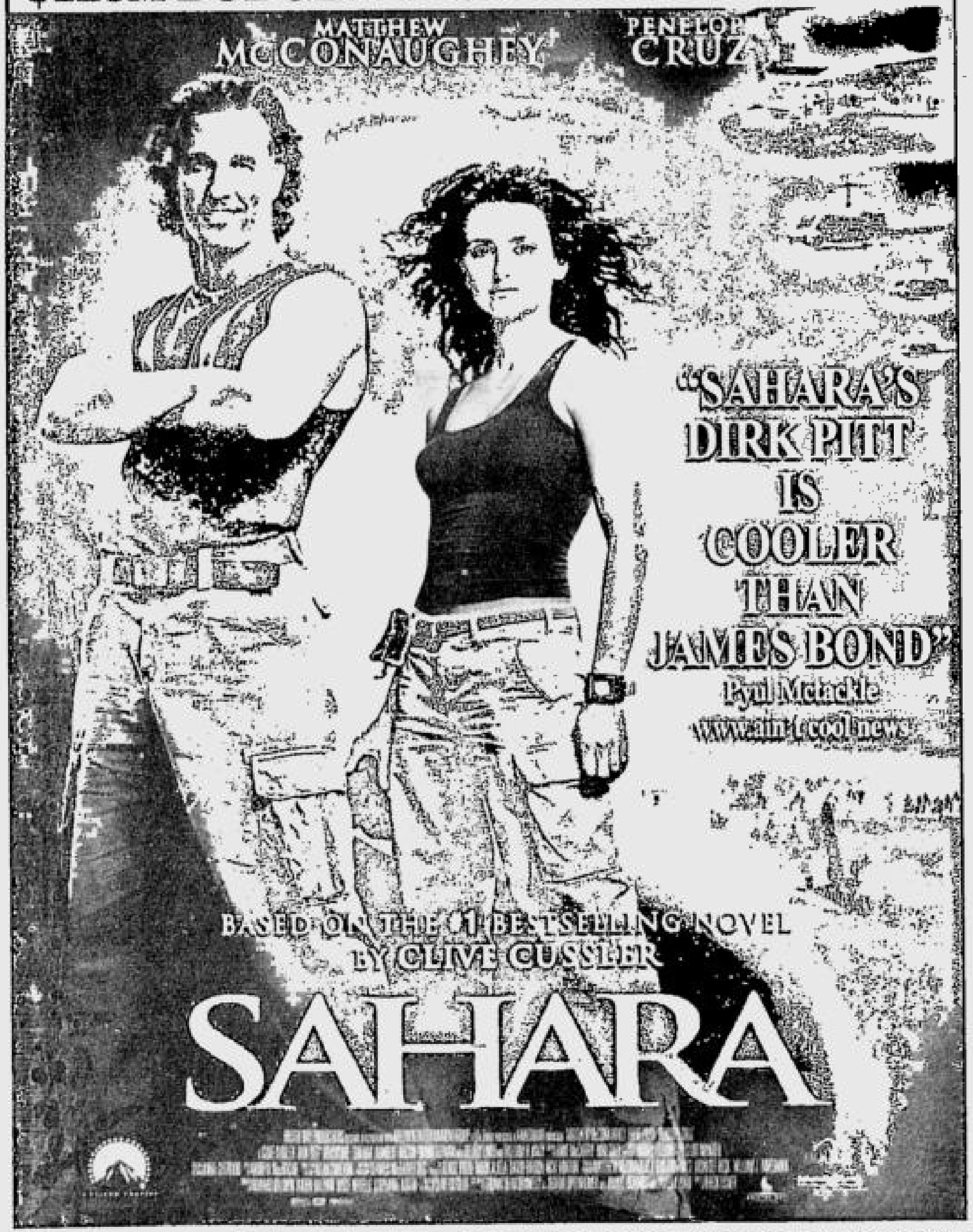

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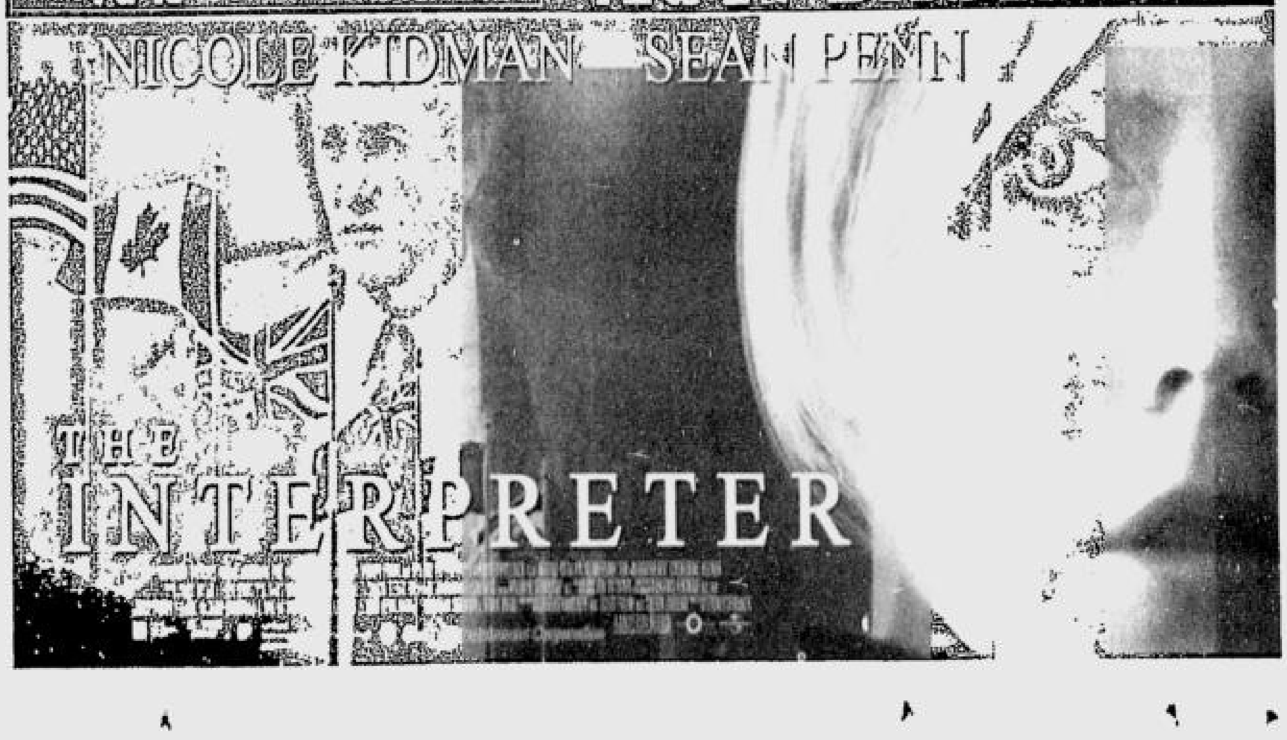

NICOLE KIDMAN SEAN PENN

THE INTERPRETER

Review needed for award-giving bodies

By Nestor U. Torre

A COUPLE of weeks ago, we wrote a piece about the inordinate number of film awards on the local film scene, their generally subjective agendas, and their lack of reliability.

All too soon, charges of vote-buying were hurled at one such awards group, thus further eroding the public's confidence and trust in film awards as a whole.

Where do we go from here? Each awards group, both legit and self-serving, has to review its reason for being, the training of its voting members, its evaluation process, the reliability of its verdicts, and how they compare to what the other groups have decided.

Film buffs

Serious film buffs should also make such a detailed review of each awards group's evaluation process, and choose to believe only the few awards with a good track record.

This may require the film buff's sampling most of the local films produced each year, and that's by no means easy to do. But, it's got to be done if the film lover wants to be able to intelligently discuss the merits of each movie, and compare them to each other.

Yes, this is like doing the jurors' work, but when official voters are unqualified or incapable, what else could a concerned film buff do?

For our part, we've become so disenchanted with most movie awards that we pay attention to the verdicts of only a couple of awards groups, and don't give the compromised others the time of day.

Bruised stance

We recommend this bruised stance to other frustrated film buffs out there, and take the additional step of suggesting that, instead of concerning ourselves with awards, let's agree to do what we can to make the local movie scene a more welcoming place for the production of more and better films.

We can do this by going out of our way to support the better Filipino movies that are being made, so that our producers are encouraged to make more of the same.

In addition, let's support the maiden efforts of new filmmakers, because we need their fresh concepts, innovative ideas, and uncompromised commitment to quality filmmaking.

While we're at it, we should also be more selective when we view Hollywood imports, to give our homegrown productions more of a fighting chance in competing with them at the box office.

Preserve and restore

Finally, we should support moves to preserve and restore our old movies, and to re-release our film classics on DVDs. One reason why the local movie scene is so uncreative is because we don't appreciate the best products of our film culture.

With Filipino film classics made more accessible and available to young viewers, we can develop a sense of history and pride in our best filmmakers' mastery of the medium.

This will go a long way in developing our national film literacy. Sure beats making too big a fuss about compromised movie awards, doesn't it?

Fluff, fun in overblown actioner

By Noelani Torre

MCCONAUGHEY. Gives his character an air of self-mockery.

THERE'S a surfeit of sand in "Sahara"—as well as courageous heroes, scheming villains and absurd plotlines. In short, all of the things you would expect from an action-adventure flick based on a novel by a master weaver of improbable plots, Clive Cussler.

Cotton candy

"Sahara" is perfect summer fare—big, swashbuckling and light as cotton candy. Being compared to fluff might be an insult for other movies, but the action-adventure just wants to have fun, and fun is what you'll get when you watch "Sahara."

Directed by Breck Eisner, this Matthew McConaughey/ Penelopé Cruz starrer does indeed take place in Africa and the Sahara desert. This overblown caper incorporates such themes as death by toxic poisoning, pollution of the world's oceans, search for an iron-clad Civil War battleship, and so on—get the picture?

This is about tall tales. For the viewer to enjoy himself, he must get into the spirit of things and suspend disbelief even when it's jumping up and down and pointing a shrill finger at yet another absurd leap.

Most viewers would gladly do this if given enough incentive, and "Sahara" has more than enough to offer. Sure, there's more story here than they know what to do with, but the pacing is fast, the action sequences explosive, and the characters are charming, even if they're archetypal.

The hero, Dirk Pitt (McConaughey), is a professional treasure hunter who is obsessed with finding the battleship somewhere under the shifting sands of the Sahara.

Swashbuckling

Like the swashbuckling heroes of old, Pitt is pretty much indestructible, managing to escape with nary a scratch from half a dozen close calls. McConaughey saves his character from being a wooden he-man by playing up the good old Southern charm—a rascally grin and a slow Texas drawl give Pitt an air of self-mockery that keeps him from seeming too square.

The trusty sidekick part is played by Steve Zahn, whose clownish Al Giordino presents just the right foil to McConaughey's unflappable "man with the plan." He keeps things on a more human level.

"Sahara" may not quite live up to the Indiana Jones action-adventure standard, but it's no throwaway movie, either.

Prime Asia bats for tourism

STREET SMART

Mandy Navasero

WITH the rise of the middle class and the corresponding increase in its disposable income, people have more money to spend on travel. Philippine tourism officials want to take advantage of that boom.

It is for this reason that Prime Asia magazine has devoted its latest issue on tourism. Gracing the magazine's front cover is Tourism Secretary Joseph "Ace" Durano, who's at the forefront of selling the country to tourists.

Discriminating travelers

Tagaytay City Mayor Abraham Tolentino is likewise offering his city as a tourism destination for discriminating travelers.

Durano wants to bring in five million tourists yearly by 2010—a far cry from last year's arrivals, which numbered around two million.

So, what's in it for Pinoys if we push tourism? Durano explains that the economic activity brought in by tourism generates jobs.

For his part, Tolentino is thankful for his city's natural treasures, cool, pollution-free air and peaceful, quiet environment. He wants to preserve and offer them to tourists in search of a rejuvenating travel experience. The mayor also wants to convert his city into a retirement destination for Japanese and Korean nationals.

* * *

'Love Earth'

Love Earth, a festival and forum on business and environment, will be held tomorrow at the Tagaytay International Convention Center. My Advanced Photography Workshop will cover the festival.

On May 12 to 16, our Travel Photography seminar will fly to Coron, Palawan and return via WG&A Superferry. Highlight of the travel is photographing the wild animals of Calauit Island.

Call 899-1767 or email mandy-navasero@yahoo.com.

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I Shot the Sheriff	Bob Marley	102583	Southpaw Vs. Gaucho	Gaucho	102609	Get High With Me	Peace Pipe	102619
Get Up Stand Up	Bob Marley	102584	Dreadlocks In My Mind	Kakay	102610	Lamok	Skabeche	102620
No Woman No Cry	Bob Marley	102585	Drop Your Gun	Peace Pipe	102611	Opus Uno: Island Joe	Island Joe	102621
Could You Be Loved	Bob Marley	102586	Part Of Me	Skabeche	102612	K-Fyno	Junior Kilat	102630
Stir It Up	Bob Marley	102587	No Regrets	Island Joe	102613	Ako Si M16	Junior Kilat	102633
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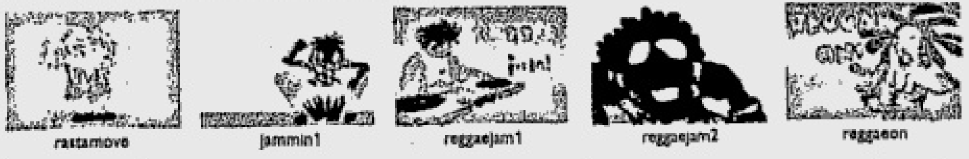
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Title	Artist	Keyword
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Drop Your Gun	Peace Pipe	DROPURGUN
Part of Me	Skabeche	PARTOFME
No Regrets	Island Joe	NOREGRETS
Beautiful Day	Bambu Spliff	BFULDAY
Mahal Kita	Tropical Depression	MAHALKITA
Beautiful Eyesore	Gaucho	BFULEYESORE
Get High With Me	Peace Pipe	GETHIGH
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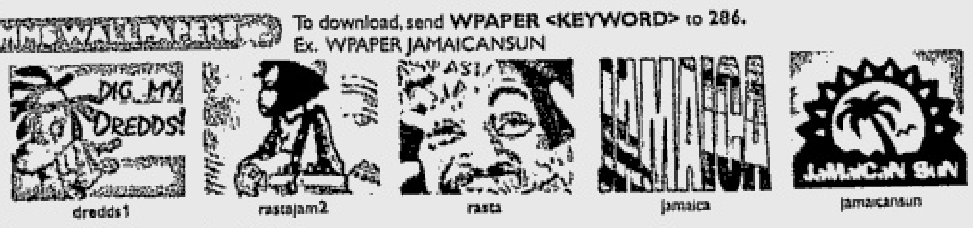
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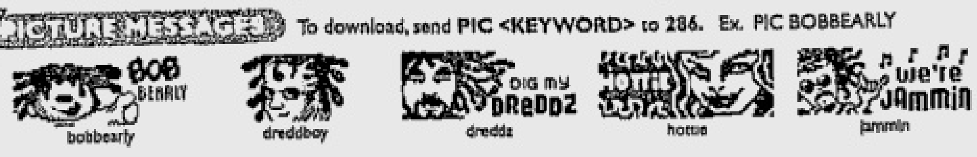
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SATURDAY Special

Outstanding Filipino films to be showcased at Cannes

Six movies were chosen to illustrate the country's 'cinematographic spirit and cultural diversity'

By Nestor U. Torre

THIS year's Cannes International Film Festival will be a special event for Filipino filmmakers, some of whose best works will be featured in the prestigious filmfest's new Tous les Cinemas du Monde program, which is dedicated to the presentation by selected countries of a varied showcase of their respective cinematographic creations.

PASCUAL AND MONTANO. Their acclaimed starrers will be screened in the world's top filmfest.

In his official invitation to Laurice Guillen-Feleo, chairperson of the Film Development Council of the Philippines, festival executive Serge Sobczynski explained that the Philippines was one of the countries chosen for showcasing due to the vitality of its productions.

After viewing a number of Filipino productions, the festival's programmers chose four full-length and two short films for the Philippine showcase:

"Panaghoy sa Suba," directed by Cesar Montano for CM Films; "Dekada '70" by Chito Roño for Star Cinema; "Bagong Buwan" by Marilou Diaz-Abaya (Star Cinema), and "Milan" by Olivia Lamasan (Star Cinema).

Short films: "Liyab" by Sockie Fernandez, and "Batang Trapo" by Mes de Guzman.

Originality

After the six films were selected by the festival's programmers, Sobczynski shared that he was "impressed by the quality and originality of the films." This bodes well for the special Philippine showcase, which will be held on May 20.

Each day of the Tous les Cinemas du Monde program will feature a particular country, with four different screening sessions for one full-length film and a short production each, plus a professional forum and reception.

The films will be exhibited at Cinema du Monde, a new movie theater constructed at the heart of the festival's Village International. Its location is accessible to all of the people attending the festival, as well as the population of Cannes, so good exposure is assured for each chosen country's featured films.

To make the event even more productive for the Philippines, a delegation of movie people, including the chosen feature films' directors, will represent the country at the event. It is hoped that, aside from the prestige attendant to the showcase, some Filipino movies will find buyers on the lookout for outstanding cinematic products for the international film market.

Participation

The Philippines' participation has been facilitated by the Film Development Council of the Philippines through its International Film Festival Committee (IFFCOM), and the French Embassy.

The Tous les Cinemas du Monde (All the Cinemas of the World) module was created just this year to present films that illustrate the chosen countries' cinematographic spirit and cultural diversity.

Aimed at the large professional audience that attends the Cannes filmfest each year, the new exhibition program intends to show the richness of world cinema, the strength of young creation, and the merit of the institutions that play a part in the growth of authentic and original cinema.

ALAM MO ANAK, ITO YUNG LAGI KONG DALA NUNG BATA PA AKO.
BAON NIYA YAN NUNG NAG-LITTLE MS. PHILIPPINES SIYA...
CHOCOLAIT
ONE OF THE FEW THINGS YOU'D LOVE TO SHARE WITH YOUR KIDS. THE CREAMY CHOCOLAITY TASTE OF THE ORIGINAL CHOCOLAIT!

NOW SHOWING

Penn, Kidman ignite big screen in cerebral thriller

By Rito P. Asilo

"The Interpreter"

D: Sydney Pollack
S: Nicole Kidman, Sean Penn

IN Sydney Pollack's engrossingly convoluted thriller, politics, murder, deception and intrigue make an engaging cinematic brew that boils at the heart of the United Nations headquarter.

In the director's taut, smart albeit protracted comeback vehicle, a Secret Service agent, Tobin Keller (Sean Penn), is assigned to protect an interpreter, Silvia Broome (Nicole Kidman), after she overhears a plot to assassinate a powerful but corrupt African dictator.

Cerebral and topical, the film deftly meshes political and personal issues that haunt its two protagonists—and its audience. This gripping but occasionally confusing parable on emotional pain, vengeance and sacrifice is, more than anything, a cinematic showcase for Penn and Kidman's considerable acting skills. It's hard to take your eyes off them, especially when they set off thespic sparks in intense, dramatic moments.

Moreover, the duo's palpable screen chemistry makes the movie's intriguing premise more involving—even a simple, wordless hug between Penn and Kidman is powerful enough to break hearts. Don't miss it!

PENN AND KIDMAN. Intense screen chemistry.

"The Jacket"

D: John Maybury
S: Adrien Brody, Keira Knightley

A year after Jack Starks (Adrien Brody), an Iraq War veteran, survives a near-fatal gunshot wound in the head, he suffers from intermittent retrograde amnesia and "acute psychological suppression."

While trying to hitch a ride in the dead of winter, he finds a stalled car, a child named Jackie and her drugged-out mother, Jean. After fixing their car, however, he is rudely shooed away. Shortly thereafter, he hitches a ride with a high-strung driver, who is soon stopped by a highway patrol officer. Next thing he knows, he wakes up on the snow-covered road—with a dead cop beside him!

Convicted of the murder, he is committed to a psychiatric facility where he meets Dr. Becker (Kris Kristofferson), who starts him on an experimental drug therapy that is supposed to reset his violent proclivities. The process involves restraining him in a straightjacket, then locking him away for hours inside a dark, metallic body drawer at the basement morgue.

The process, however, transports him five years into the future, where he meets the lonely and bitter Jackie (Keira Knightley), now all grown up, lonely and jaded. She then tells him that the Jack she once met had died five years earlier—and he has to uncover the mystery, from his present stay in the asylum, before it's too late!

John Maybury tries but fails to logically mesh his film's engaging situational vignettes into one substantial and cohesive narrative—there isn't even an explanation, scientific or otherwise, for how his down-on-his-luck protagonist is transported to and from the future.

Some horror-genre fans may like the "uncertainty" of being left in the dark. But without a grain of believability, it's hard to relate to stories that are devoid of logic—and, despite Brody's involved performance, the film's dark, noirish tone isn't a good enough reason to let this muddled thriller off the hook.

"Samara: The Ring 2"

D: Hideo Nakata
S: Naomi Watts, Simon Baker

Naomi Watts lends her *gravitas* to a moderately creepy sequel, based on Hideo Nakata's Japanese cult hit, "The Ring." Watts returns as Rachel, the desperate mother of a haunted child (David Dorfman), who uncovers the secret behind the killer videotape and the disturbing story of its vengeful ghost, Samara.

The latest incarnation of the chilling "Ringu" film franchise may have lost its scare-me-to-death zing (in fact, it loses steam halfway through), but the cast's earnest performances and some genuinely tricky special affects (a bathroom scene with water dripping and dropping violently upward!) keep the tired, trite material moderately watchable. (It does say something precautionary: "Be a good mother, listen to your baby...")

Nakata, who takes over the directorial reins from Gore Verbinski, lends his unique Asian horror-grit sensibility to his big Hollywood debut.

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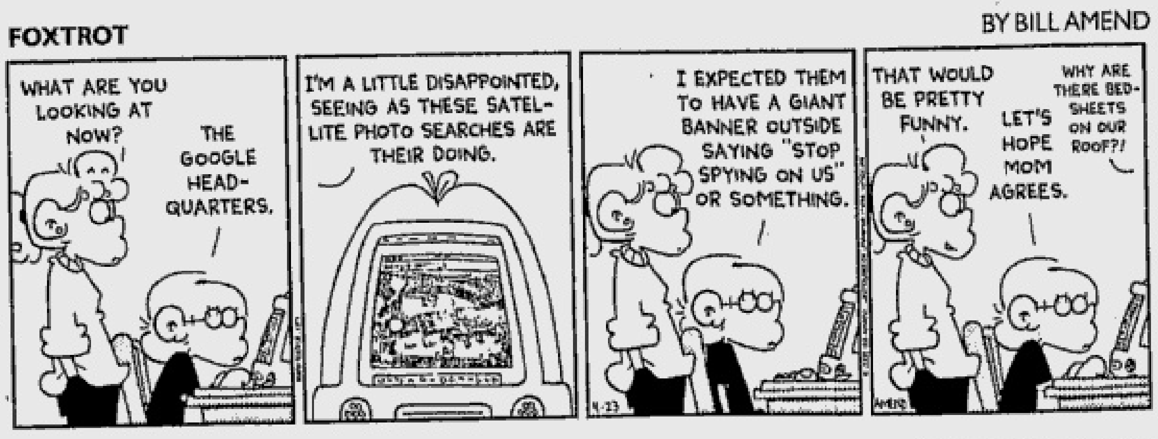
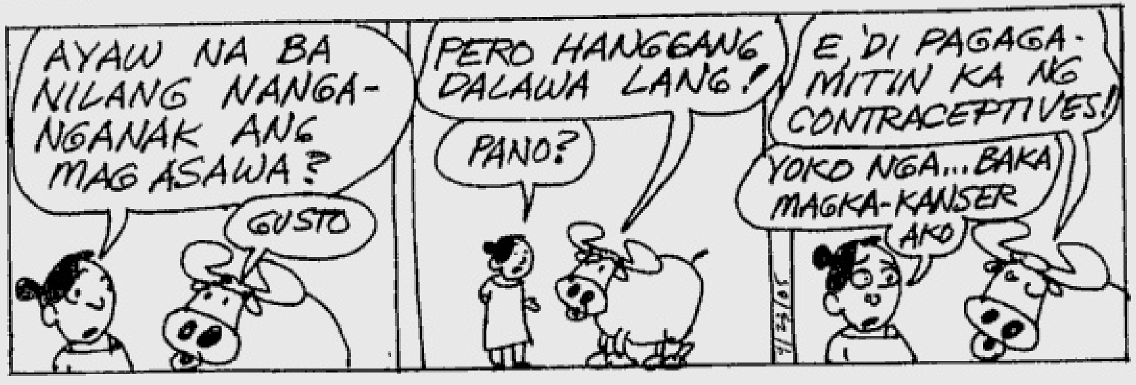
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT NOW?
THE GOOGLE HEADQUARTERS.
I'M A LITTLE DISAPPOINTED, SEEING AS THESE SATELLITE PHOTO SEARCHES ARE THEIR DOING.
I EXPECTED THEM TO HAVE A GIANT BANNER OUTSIDE SAYING "STOP SPYING ON US" OR SOMETHING.
THAT WOULD BE PRETTY FUNNY.
LET'S HOPE MOM AGREES.
WHY ARE THERE BEDSHEETS ON OUR ROOF?!
4-23

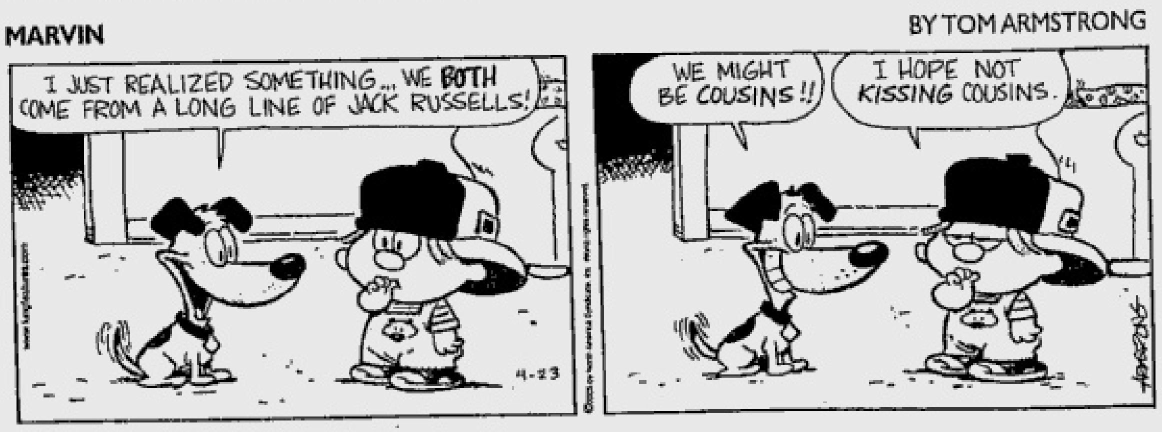
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


AYAW NA BA NILANG NANGANGANAK ANG MAG ASAWA?
GUSTO
PERO HANGGANG DALAWA LANG!
PANO?
E 'DI PAGAGAMITIN KA NG CONTRACEPTIVES!
YOKO NGA... BAKA MAGKA-KANSER AKO

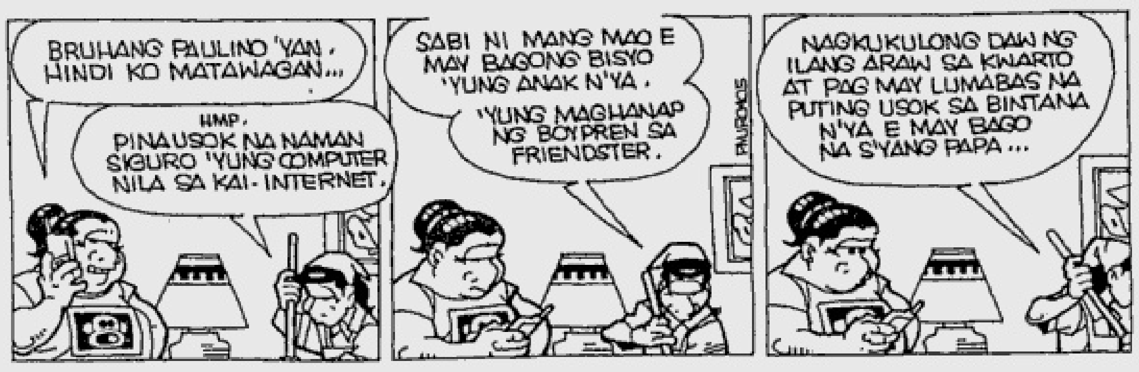
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


I JUST REALIZED SOMETHING... WE BOTH COME FROM A LONG LINE OF JACK RUSSELLS!
4-23
WE MIGHT BE COUSINS!!
I HOPE NOT KISSING COUSINS.

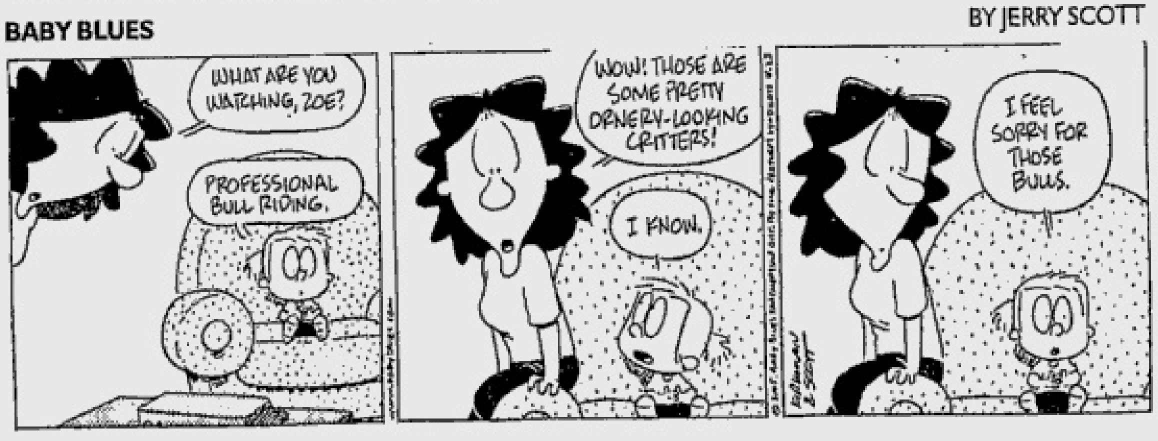
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


BRUHANG PAULINO 'YAN. HINDI KO MATAWAGAN...
HMP. PINAUSOK NA NAMAN SIGURO 'YUNG COMPUTER NILA SA KAI-INTERNET.
SABI NI MANG MAO E MAY BAGONG BISYO 'YUNG ANAK N'YA.
'YUNG MAGHANAP NG BOYPREN SA FRIENDSTER.
NAGKUKULONG DAW NG ILANG ARAW SA KWARTO AT PAG MAY LUMABAS NA PUTING USOK SA BINTANA N'YA E MAY BAGO NA S'YANG PAPA...

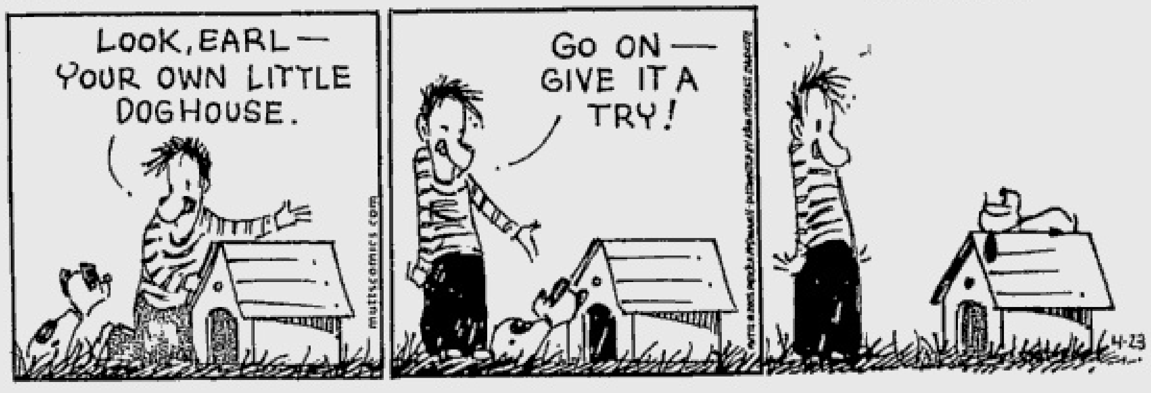
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


WHAT ARE YOU WATCHING, ZOE?
PROFESSIONAL BULL RIDING.
WOW! THOSE ARE SOME PRETTY ORNERY-LOOKING CRITTERS!
I KNOW.
I FEEL SORRY FOR THOSE BULLS.

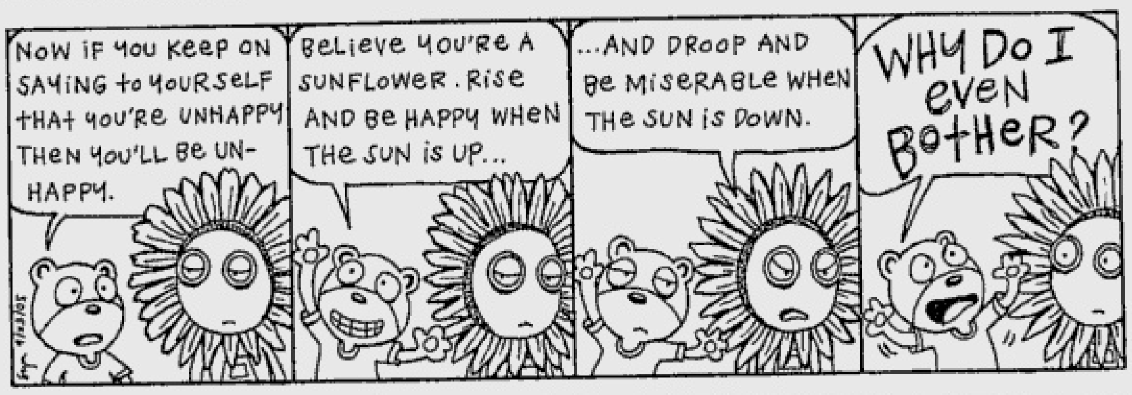
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


LOOK, EARL — YOUR OWN LITTLE DOGHOUSE.
GO ON — GIVE IT A TRY!
4-23

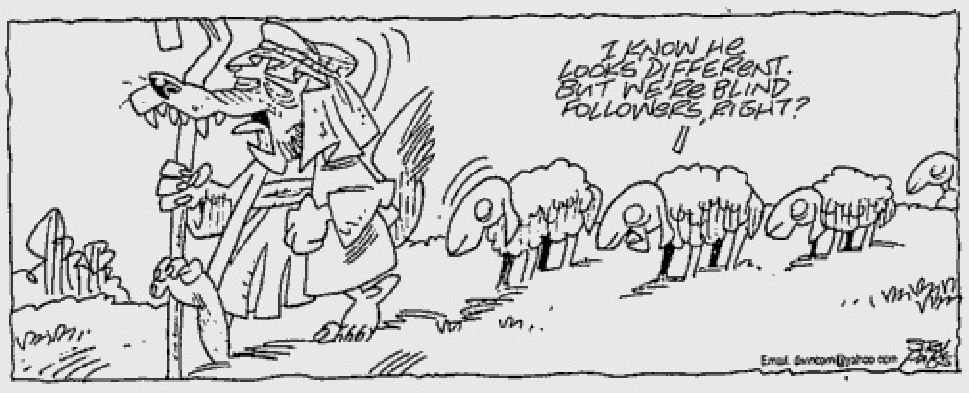
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


NOW IF YOU KEEP ON SAYING TO YOURSELF THAT YOU'RE UNHAPPY THEN YOU'LL BE UNHAPPY.
BELIEVE YOU'RE A SUNFLOWER. RISE AND BE HAPPY WHEN THE SUN IS UP...
...AND DROOP AND BE MISERABLE WHEN THE SUN IS DOWN.
WHY DO I EVEN BOTHER?

DIVINE COMEDY

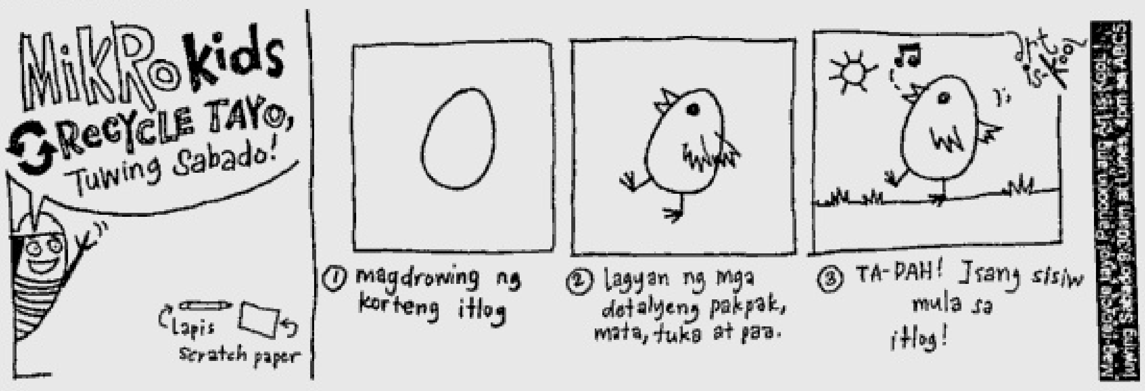
BY STEVEN PABALINAS


I KNOW HE LOOKS DIFFERENT. BUT WE'RE BLIND FOLLOWERS, RIGHT?

DAVID LOST HALF OF HIS FLOCK THAT DAY WHEN THE BIG BAD WOLF ASSUMED HIS IDENTITY

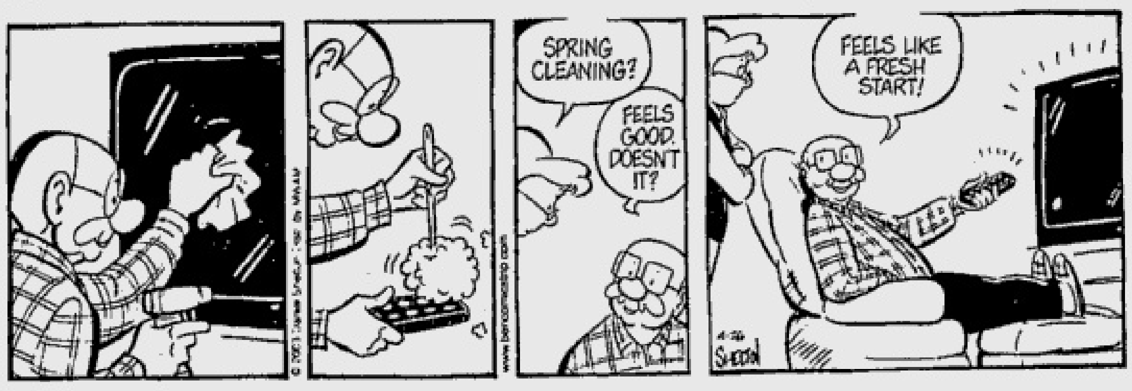
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


MiKRo kids
RECYCLE TAYO, Tuwing Sabado!
Lapis
Scratch paper
① magdrowing ng korteng itlog
② lagyan ng mga detalyeng pakpak, mata, tuka at paa.
③ TA-DAH! Isang sisiw mula sa itlog!
art is kool

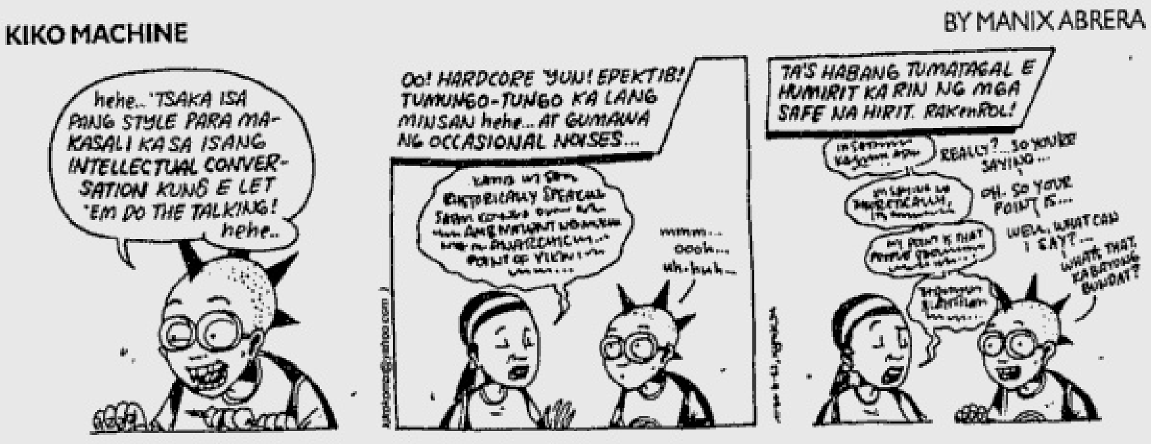
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


SPRING CLEANING?
FEELS GOOD. DOESN'T IT?
FEELS LIKE A FRESH START!

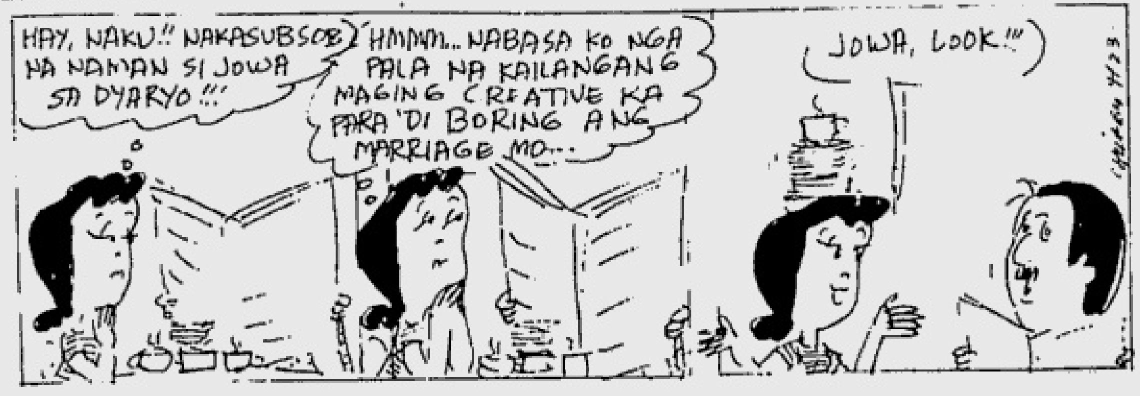
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


hehe.. 'TSAKA ISA PANG STYLE PARA MAKASALI KA SA ISANG INTELLECTUAL CONVERSATION KUNG E LET 'EM DO THE TALKING! hehe..
OO! HARDCORE 'YUN! EPEKTIB! TUMUNGO-TUNGO KA LANG MINSAN hehe... AT GUMAWA NG OCCASIONAL NOISES...
mmm... oooh... uh-huh...
TA'S HABANG TUMATAGAL E HUMIRIT KA RIN NG MGA SAFE NA HIRIT. RAKenROL!
REALLY?... SO YOU'RE SAYING...
OH. SO YOUR POINT IS...
WELL, WHAT CAN I SAY?...

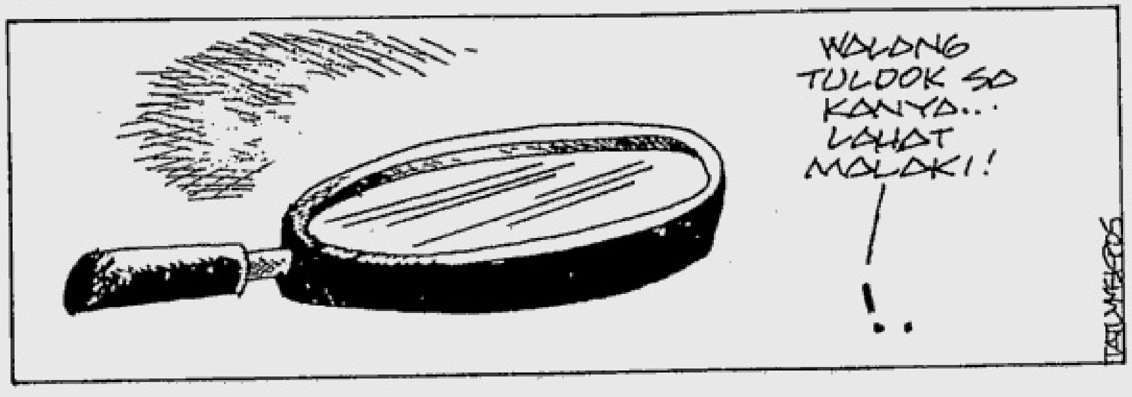
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


HAY, NAKU!! NAKASUBSOB NA NAMAN SI JOWA SA DYARYO!!!
HMMM... NABASA KO NGA PALA NA KAILANGANG MAGING CREATIVE KA PARA 'DI BORING ANG MARRIAGE MO...
JOWA, LOOK!!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


WALANG TULDOK SA KANYA... LAHAT MALAKI!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have a talented gift for drama. You understand timing, and you understand what makes people tick. You work well in conjunction with co-workers. You will always work for your own security. You are a shrewd observer of the foibles of others. You're a fine parent. Increased solitude this year lets you study and learn something important.

Birthdate of: Michael Moore, documentary filmmaker; Shirley Temple Black, actress; William Shakespeare, playwright/poet.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Join forces with others today to make things happen. This is an excellent day for physical activity and sports. Whatever you do will be an improvement.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Your ambition is aroused, and today is the day to do something about it. Talk to bosses and parents about your cost-saving ideas. You definitely see better ways of doing things.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): If you work in publishing, higher education, medicine or the law, you truly amaze others today. You have bold ideas, and you're not afraid to act on them.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You see better ways of using the resources of others to make improvements both in their lives and your own. Others should listen to you today.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Work with others to improve the lot of children in your world. Resist the urge to remake your partner today. Instead, focus this energy on helping or reshaping others.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): The alignment of the planets beautifully allows you to improve your health today. Do anything that can benefit you. Get exercise; eat well; do sports; get a massage—whatever.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Creative and artistic types can make great headway today in projects. You see new ways of doing things. And you're not afraid to try them.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): This is the perfect day to do repairs at home. They might be minor, or they could be huge! Whatever you do will work out well and swiftly. The results will be superior. (You'll be pleased.)

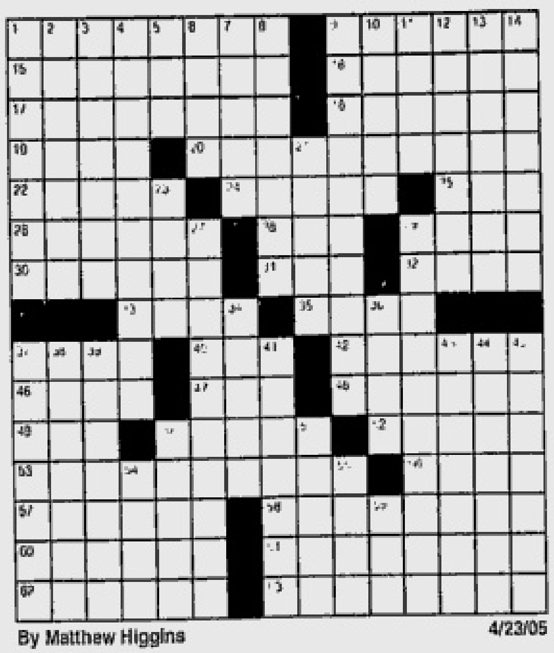
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You are incredibly convincing today. You can sell snow to Eskimos. This is definitely the day to go after anything you want. No one can resist you!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is a good day to make money. You feel shrewd and powerful. You're not afraid to act bold and swiftly. You'll get the results you want.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Try to get physical exercise today. Whatever you do will give you enormous benefits immediately. Stretching, yoga and gymnastics will particularly help you. Go for a walk.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You might discover some interesting secrets today. Something could be revealed to you. Handle this information with courtesy and respect.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Matthew Higgins
Concord, NH

4/23/05

ACROSS
1 Making preparations
9 Meteorological conditions
15 Purposeful undertaking
16 Conductor James
17 Military jail
18 Zoroastrian sacred texts
19 Place on the payroll
20 Close calls
22 Passing with flying colors
24 Elements of pipes
25 $ from a bank
26 Confined
28 Center starter?
29 Stiff bristle
30 More uneasy
31 Sprinted
32 __-friendly
33 Hawaiian guitars, briefly
35 Kennel comment
37 Raise cane
40 Exclamation of triumph
42 Loren of "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow"
46 Corrida cheers
47 Crackers
48 See ya!
49 Law enforcement grp.
50 Nobel prize physicist, 1933
52 Chop into tiny bits
53 Sumpter
56 Spiraling shape
57 Start breathing
58 Menu option
60 Strainers
61 Candidates
62 Torment
63 Check picker-uppers

DOWN
1 Form anew
2 Inveigled
3 Worshipful
4 Ten-year periods
5 Chatter
6 Reitman or Rodriguez
7 Centering points
8 Larger
9 Disagreeably moist state
10 Trademark jeans
11 Folk singer Burl
12 Young girls: colloq.
13 International understanding
14 Coral predator
21 Return in kind
23 Social misfit
27 State of reverie
29 Humble petitioner
34 Puppeteer Lewis
36 Tower
37 Excessively fastidious in manner
38 Country on the Adriatic
39 Outstretcher
41 Inflexible
43 VIP at a banquet
44 Rabble-rouser
45 Never growing old
50 Bucolic valleys
51 Warmth in Barcelona
54 Polynesian beverage
55 Word with duck or excuse
59 Successor of the OSS

Friday's Puzzle Solved

M	A	N	N	A	■	B	O	O	M	■	S	E	T	S
O	N	A	I	R	■	U	N	D	O	■	T	R	E	E
S	T	U	C	K	O	N	Y	O	U	■	A	R	M	S
S	I	T	F	■	T	U	X	■	S	C	R	I	P	T
■	P	I	R	A	T	E	■	C	I	A	■	N	E	E
M	O	C	■	H	O	L	D	O	N	T	I	G	H	T
A	D	A	M	S	■	■	R	I	G	O	R	■	■	■
D	E	L	I	■	F	O	I	L	S	■	O	K	R	A
■	■	■	K	R	I	L	L	■	■	I	N	N	E	R
C	O	M	E	U	N	G	L	U	E	D	■	O	A	T
A	L	A	■	S	E	A	■	P	L	A	N	T	S	■
D	I	V	O	T	S	■	S	P	A	■	A	H	O	Y
E	V	E	N	■	S	E	T	I	N	S	T	O	N	E
T	I	N	E	■	E	D	I	T	■	H	E	L	E	N
S	A	S	S	■	D	O	R	Y	■	U	S	E	R	S

4/22/05

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Music is Dermot Mulroney's first love

FROM Mindy Clarito: "I loved Dermot Mulroney in 'My Best Friend's Wedding' and 'The Wedding Date.' How did he get his start in show biz?"

SHOW BIZ Q & A

Rito P. Asilo

Dermot Mulroney's fascination for the performing arts sprang from his love for music. He was in grade school when he learned to play the cello to join the local youth orchestra. In high school, he debuted in a stage play called "Are Teachers Human?"

He may have earned a music degree at Northwestern University, but it was in acting where Dermot found his calling:

Auditioning frenzy

After finishing college, he started an auditioning frenzy that yielded TV projects, and led him to the love of his life, actress Catherine Keener, with whom he has a son, Clyde—who only came into their lives after nine years of marriage! The boy will turn six in June.

Movie enthusiasts remember Mulroney best in rom-com "wedding" flicks like the currently showing "The Wedding Date" and the Julia Roberts starrer "My Best Friend's Wedding," but his filmography is an impressive hodgepodge of tastes and types: "Young Guns," "How to Make an American Quilt," "About Schmidt," etc.

But, the 41-year-old, 5'9" actor is more than just brawn and brooding charm: In 1992, he was honored with a best actor award at the Seattle International Film Festival for his back-to-back work in Marc Rocco's "Where the Day Takes You" and Stephen La Rocque's "Samantha."

Despite a busy film schedule, however, Dermot hasn't turned his back on his musical roots: He plays the cello, mandolin, acoustic guitar, violin, harmonica, trumpet and saxophone, and regularly performs with the Low and Sweet Orchestra—he even recorded an album, "Goodbye to All That," with the group!

Confident baritone

Can he sing? We've heard him sing in Peter Bogdanovich's "This Thing Called Love," which starred River Phoenix and Sandra Bullock, in a track called "Reason to Believe." Mulroney's singing voice is a rich and confident baritone best suited for ballads and standards. (It's also interesting to note that, for the film, Bullock contributed a song she co-wrote—and sang!)

MULRONEY. He found his calling in acting.

Dermot's next movie doesn't veer too far away from the film type he's most famous for—light romantic-comedy: He will topbill Gary David Goldberg's "Must Love Dogs," about a fortysomething preschool teacher (Diane Lane) who turns to the personals for love. Sounds familiar?

His most popular movies may have featured him in wholesome roles, but he's also known to accept assignments that test his acting mettle—like Alan Rudolph's "Investigating Sex," about a group of stenographers scientifically studying sex. In the movie, he shows more than that: He struts his thespic chops—and does the full monty!

* * *

Filipino filmfest in New York

Forwarded to us by filmmaker Rica Arevalo: Ramon Mappala (NYC Filipino Festival) and Mye Hoang (ImaginAsian) are inviting interested parties to take part in the Filipino Film Festival in New York, from June 10 to 16 at the ImaginAsian Theater.

The festival, held to coincide with the Philippine Independence Day celebrations, is looking for finished films for inclusion in its program. For more info, email rmap878950@aol.com.

Edgier, nastier home video shows launched

By Nestor U. Torre

THE HOME video revolution has spawned compilation comedy shows like "America's Funniest Home Videos." At first, the video programs' viewers were quite happy laughing at hapless people's clueless mistakes and accidents.

After some years, however, the appeal of all that upbeat inadvertent comedy began to pall, so new shows were produced that had an edgier, nastier and more violent agenda.

Two examples of those edgier shows are on view on Star World on Monday afternoons: At 2 p.m., "Outrageous Behavior" chronicles ridiculously brave people's feats of physical daring, like a guy turning cartwheels on a motorcycle—with the bike landing on top of him!

Disasters

Other disasters documented by home video cameras include skateboarding on an ice-covered pond (and falling into the icy-cold water, of course); a slab of rock rolling down a hill and smashing into a truck, and a van slamming into a building.

At first, the accidents come off as funny-pathetic, but seen together as a series, they lose their capacity to bemuse, and end up as sad examples of man's capacity to inflict pain on himself. Thus, the behavior caught on camera for the show is not really outrageous, but rather masochistic.

The follow-up show, "Weird TV" (at 2:30 p.m.), is more viewable because its features are more varied, and take us to different parts of the world.

One weird feature, set in Pakistan, has the world's tallest man and woman interacting with a fully-grown dwarf who measures just 63 cm "tall."

Shivering patrons

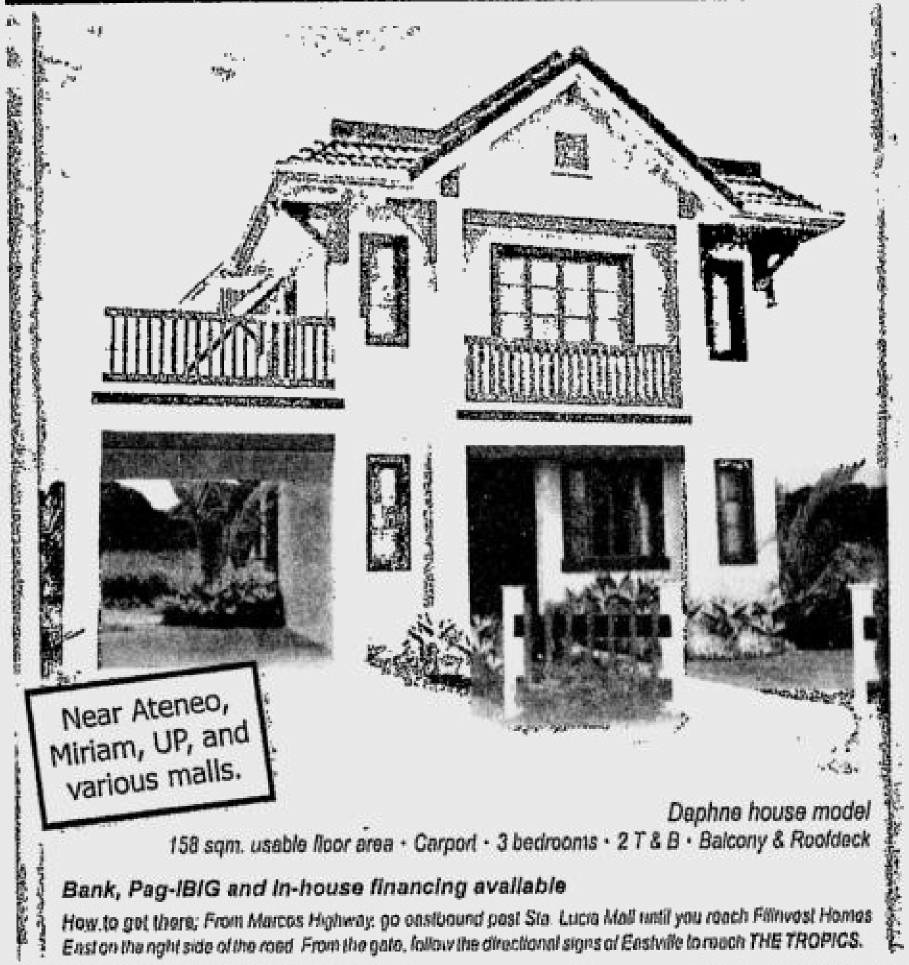
Another portion of the show focuses on an "ice bar" in Stockholm, with shivering patrons gamely downing drinks poured into glasses made out of ice—no need for ice cubes, yeah, right.

In the United States, the estates of deceased pet owners pay thousands of dollars each year for the upkeep and pampering of their "orphaned" animals.

In Thailand, an iguana is believed to be the reincarnation of a young man, and is thus fed and loved by his family. People have come to believe that the iguana has special powers, so they pay good money for it to give them luck in their various endeavors.

That last Asian feature prompts us to realize that similar superstitious beliefs and occurrences in this country could also be included in the show—like the Pinay who gave birth to a fish, healers possessed by sundry saints, and masochistic folks who have themselves nailed on the cross, etc!

While we're at it, we could also make a mint doing TV features on other strange phenomena on the local scene, like certified non-talents who "win" acting awards, singing "sensations" who can't carry a tune—and midget stars with nude videos!



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Carradine portrays Bush in 'Stuff Happens'

LOS ANGELES—Keith Carradine as George W. Bush?

Carradine, who appeared in Robert Altman cult films such as "Nashville" and "Thieves Like Us," as well as on Broadway in "The Will Rogers Follies," will portray the US president in the American premiere of David Hare's play about the lead-up to the American invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The drama, "Stuff Happens," which will open in June at the Mark Taper Forum, also stars Julian Sands as British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Positive reviews

"Stuff Happens" had its world premiere last September at London's National Theater, where it opened to positive reviews. The American production is directed by Gordon Davidson.

CARRADINE. Plays the American president in David Hare's new play.

Hare, who based the play on public documents, as well as his own imagination, has written such dramas as "Plenty," "Racing Demon," "The Blue Room," "Amy's View" and "The Judas Kiss."

The title comes from a comment made in April 2003 by Rumsfeld in response to looting in Baghdad: "Stuff happens . . . and it's untidy, and free people are allowed to make mistakes, commit crimes and do bad things." *AP*

Perfect location

LOTUS POND

R. Valencia and S. Bismark

THIS COLUMN is a continuation of our discussion on the changes that confront us in our daily lives. It is taken from a lecture given by the world-renowned sage, Jagad Guru Siddhaswarupananda:

"What do we do when change happens? We try to adjust our position. It's like we are thrown off balance and we struggle to find the balance, in the new setting. We adjust to the new condition, but then it changes again, and life becomes a juggling act.

"I exist in an impermanent environment: I build my house, and as soon as I finish building it, the ground moves from beneath it and I have to move and adjust. Then, it moves again, and I adjust once more!

New situation

"What does it mean to adjust? I try and get comfortable in the new situation. My whole life is bent on trying to get security. I seek that place where I feel solidarity. But as soon as I do that, it changes again. So, I'm always looking for the security of the permanent—for that which does not change.

"There's a saying in real estate that one has to always consider three things—location, location, location. Well, the spiritual world is the perfect location!

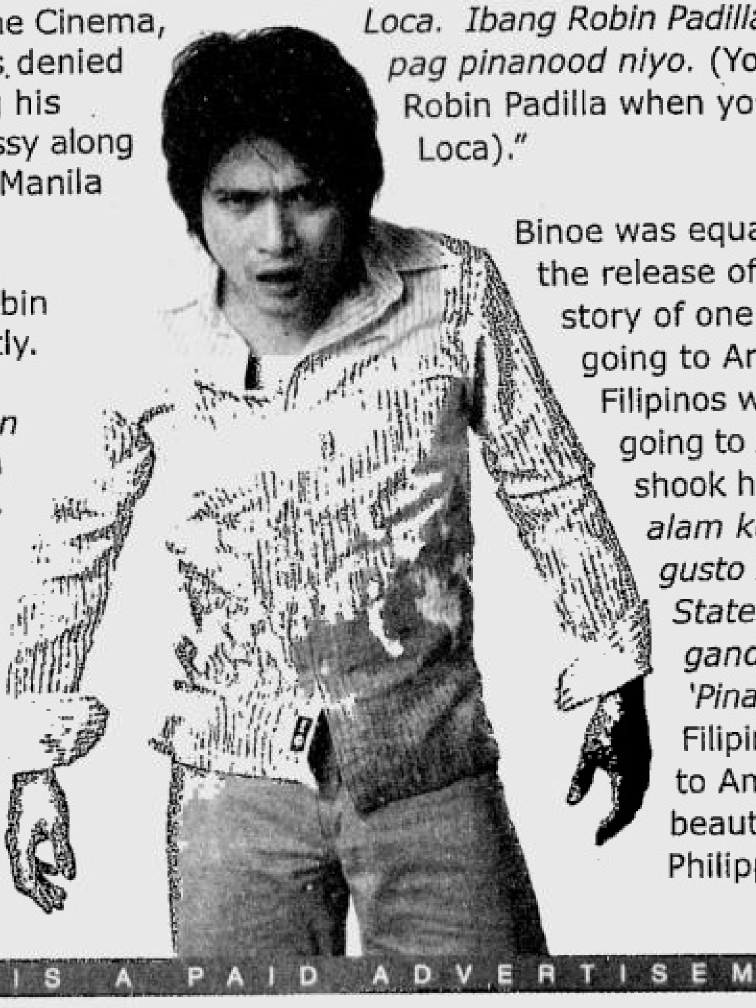
"We first make a home in the impermanent material arena in this temporary material body. We have made a home in the worst possible location!

Mirror

"You look in the mirror: 'Who's that?' Years quickly go by. The eyebags look horrible, and the gray hairs increase. 'Oh, my tooth fell out. The dentist said he'd give me a permanent filling!' A permanent filling for an impermanent tooth?!

"I am the eternal spirit soul living in an impermanent body in a changing world, and I have no security. I have no rest. I need to use this human form of life to take shelter in the *permanent*.

"How do I take shelter in the eternal?" *(To be continued)*



BINOE DENIED ENTRY TO THE U.S.

Being a famous movie star is no guarantee that you'll be granted a U.S. Visa.

That was the lesson learned by the proclaimed Idol of Philippine Cinema, Robin Padilla, after he was denied entry to the U.S. following his interview at the U.S. Embassy along Roxas Boulevard, Ermita, Manila yesterday morning.

Despite a heavy heart, Robin just took the incident lightly.

"*Sinabi ko magbabakasyon ako* (I said I was going on vacation)," narrated Binoe. "*Ginawa ko naman lahat. Hindi naman ako na-late sa interview. Na-deny pa rin* (I did everything I could. I wasn't late. But they still denied me entry)."

We suddenly heard Director Mark Meily's voice. "Cut! Good take Robin! Next scene *na tayo* (Let's move on to the next scene)!" Mark, award-winning director of the film *Crying Ladies*, said about his latest work, "*Kakaiba ang ginawang pag-arte ni Robin dito sa La Visa Loca. Ibang Robin Padilla ang makikita niyo pag pinanood niyo.* (You'll see a different Robin Padilla when you watch La Visa Loca)."

Binoe was equally excited about the release of La Visa Loca, the story of one Pinoy crazy about going to America. On the Filipinos who are crazy about going to America, Robin just shook his head. "*'Di ko nga alam kung bakit gustong-gusto ng mga Pinoy mag-States eh... ang ganda-ganda naman dito sa 'Pinas* (I don't know why Filipinos want to migrate to America when it's so beautiful here in the Philippines)."

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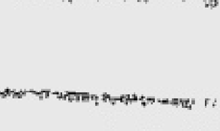

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Japan investors turn bullish on RP

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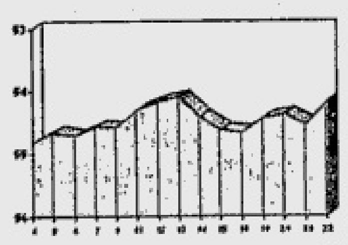


P54.17 = $1

As of 5 p.m., April 22, 2005

¥106.52= $1

As of 5 p.m., April 22, 2005

GOLD: $433.30-433.80

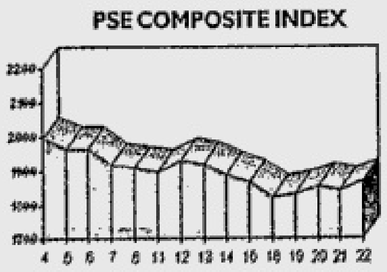
per ounce Hong Kong,April 22, 2005

April 22, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.765931	1.000000	54.3690
Japan	Yen	0.007165	0.009355	0.5086
United Kingdom	Pound	1.462469	1.909400	103.8122
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.098206	0.128218	6.9711
Switzerland	Franc	0.647777	0.845737	45.9819
Canada	Dollar	0.618434	0.807428	43.8991
Singapore	Dollar	0.464680	0.606686	32.9849
Australia	Dollar	0.593745	0.775194	42.1465
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.031756	2.652661	144.2225
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.204243	0.266660	14.4980
Brunei	Dollar	0.463274	0.604851	32.8851
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000079	0.000103	0.0056
Thailand	Baht	0.019351	0.025265	1.3736
UAE	Dirham	0.208542	0.272272	14.8032
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.305600	70.9842
Argentina	Peso	0.264342	0.345125	18.7641
Brazil	Real	0.300542	0.392388	21.3337
Denmark	Kröner	0.134235	0.175257	9.5285
India	Rupee	0.017535	0.022894	1.2447
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.201588	0.263193	14.3095
Mexico	New Peso	0.069529	0.090777	4.9355
New Zealand	Dollar	0.556595	0.726691	39.5095
Norway	Kroner	0.122700	0.160197	8.7098
Korea	Won	0.000760	0.000992	0.0539
Syria	Pound	0.014755	0.019264	1.0474
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024308	0.031736	1.7255

STOCK MARKET

Shares close 1.42% higher

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



SHARE prices closed 1.42 percent higher yesterday, finishing a volatile week on a positive note after strong gains on Wall Street overnight, dealers said.

Despite the bounce, low turnover suggested most investors chose to stay on the sidelines, with the gains largely technical, they added.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index gained 26.19 points to 1,868.13 after trading between 1,841.94 and 1,874.23 on volume of 516 million shares worth P1.32 billion.

Gainers beat losers 64 to 18, with 41 stocks unchanged. *AFP*

By Doris C. Dumlao

JAPANESE investors have turned bullish on the Philippines for the first time in three months, but their sentiment was far more favorable for Thailand and Indonesia, the latest Japan External Trade Organization survey showed.

But Jetro, a Japanese government-related organization that promotes mutually beneficial trade and investment relations, saw in its survey further improvement in the outlook on the Philippines over the next two to three months.

The April survey of Japanese companies and affiliates operating in 12 countries/regions of East Asia showed that overall business sentiment in Asia improved for the first time in nine months, with current diffusion indices (DIs) returning to positive territory in two locations--the Philippines and South Korea.

Among the five biggest economies of Asean, Indonesia reaped the most favorable view.

Jetro polls the companies to measure year-on-year changes, expressed as DIs, in their business outlooks for the current month and the next two to three months. Companies were polled between April 1 and 7, 2005. The DI is the percentage share of firms that answered in the affirmative less those that answered negative in a given indicator. A positive DI indicates a favorable view when measuring confidence levels.

The Philippines' April DI for business sentiment stood at 1.6 percent, much lower compared to Indonesia's 25.4 percent and Thailand's 23.1 percent but much better than the negative DI for Malaysia and Singapore, which obtained -16.5 percent and -3.4 percent, respectively.

About 28 percent of Japanese respondents felt the sentiment was better in April compared to 26 percent who said the situation had turned worse. About 46.4 percent said the sentiment was the same.

However, the DI for business outlook over the next two to three months was higher at 6.6 percent, with 29.8 percent saying their outlook for the Philippines was better compared to 23.2 percent who were pessimistic.

Forward business sentiment in fact declined in every Asean-5 country, with the exception of the Philippines, although the DI for Indonesia was still much higher at 15.8 percent.

The DI for business outlook on Thailand was 4.4 percent while Singapore and Malaysia were still in the negative territory at -6.1 percent and -17.5 percent, respectively.

For the whole of East Asia, sentiment concerning the next two to three months was mixed in April, leaving overall forward sentiment for the surveyed region unchanged in April.

Finance pushes 12% VAT

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance said it would no longer push for measures that would raise taxes if Congress passes the Arroyo administration's proposed two-percentage point increase in the value-added tax.

Finance Undersecretary Emmanuel Bonoan said the VAT version of the Arroyo administration would be enough to fill in the government's additional cash requirements to wipe out the budget deficit on or before 2010.

The increase in the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent and the lifting of several VAT exemptions are estimated to yield at least P60 billion in additional revenues a year, Bonoan said.

However, the bicameral conference committee of Congress, which is deliberating the VAT bill, was said to be considering only a one-percentage point increase to 11 percent. The 11-percent VAT

BONOAN

was a middle-ground proposal reconciling the different versions of the Lower House and the Senate. The former earlier approved a 12-percent VAT, while the latter kept the rate at 10 percent but proposed more sectors to be covered by the tax.

Bonoan said that if Congress passes a bill seeking to impose an 11-percent VAT, then the DOF would have no choice but the push for other tax-increase measures. An 11-percent VAT would only yield P50 billion in additional revenues a year.

Other possible tax-raising measures include the imposition

FINANCE/B2

NHMFC generates P4B from SPV deal

THE NATIONAL Home Mortgage Finance Corp. has raised P4 billion from the sale of a 51-percent stake in a joint venture that will manage the restructuring and collection of its most delinquent residential mortgages.

The 51-percent interest in the joint venture, which was launched yesterday, represents 50,000 bad loan accounts with a book value of about P13 billion bought by Deutsche Bank unit DB Real Estate Global Opportunities IB LP Fund (DBGO) in a bidding last year.

The NHMFC will retain a 49-percent stake in the special purpose vehicle (SPV) set up for the joint venture-Balikatan Housing Finance Inc.-and have an equivalent share in the proceeds of future collections of its bad loans.

During the signing of the joint venture, NHMFC president Celso delos Angeles said: "The result of the transaction creates a win-win situation for both the borrowers and NHMFC."

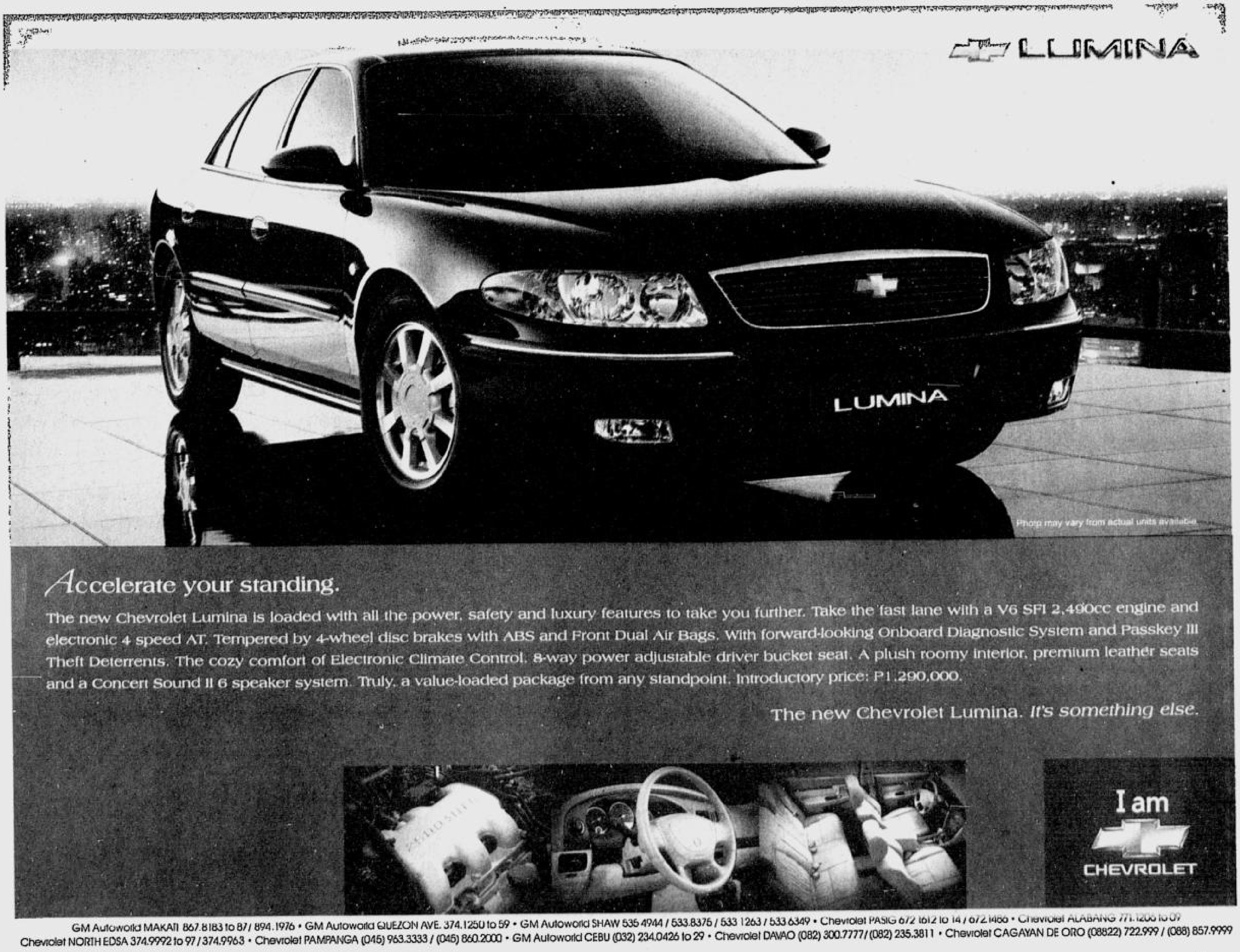
"The borrowers can restructure their loans at terms currently unavailable with NHMFC and NHMFC can realize a much higher recovery on the loans from the partial sale of a 51-percent interest in the loans from the partial sale of a 51 percent interest in the loans and its future sharing of the cash payments made by the restructured borrowers," Delos Angeles explained.

The loans unloaded into the joint venture included residential mortgages from the Unified Home Lending Program (UHLP), originated between 1987 and 1996 to borrowers that were members of either the Social Security System or the Home Development Mutual Fund.

About 12,000 of the 50,000 sold accounts were those of borrowers who had never made a single payment to the NHMFC.

The Asian Development Bank and International Finance Corp.

NHMFC/B2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Keeping a straight fish

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

MANY of you used to think that, because fuel prices were mercilessly going up, this cute beach-combing administration of Gloriaetta was becoming helpless.

You must have gotten the biggest surprise of your life then when, in a daring show of futility, Gloriaetta recently came out on television to talk about those stinging increases.

From what I gathered, as I tuned in to the newscast of the most-favored network of this cute administration, Gloriaetta already cornered the villains. And they were none other than the gas station boys.

* * *

NO, sorry, not them! Actually, Gloriaetta pointed an accusing finger at the local oil companies.

In fact, while keeping a straight face, Gloriaetta even asked, on national television, a rhetorical question designed (subtly) to expose their wicked, fiendish, evil scheme, maybe because the most powerful individual in the land could not say it openly.

And that question was, why do oil companies keep on raising prices? (Not that we already know that, boss!)

Based on the mere fact that the President of the Republic asked questions on national television, instead of giving answers, do you really think it showed helplessness?

Come on. Admit it. She got you there. So you still think this cute administration is helpless, huh! I know you are turning red in the face right now!

* * *

IN a televised display of mock firmness, Gloriaetta wondered aloud why, even as oil prices dropped abroad, oil firms here still raised prices.

To the millions of viewers of that most favored network of this cute administration, therefore, it was clear what Gloriaetta tried to imply.

And that was, the oil companies here were OVERPRICING.

Because of that, we have to suffer transport strikes. And we have to raise wages to prevent labor unrest, because most of us can no longer afford even just a straight, twisted, or rotten piece of galunggong, even if we buy the fish straight from the "Gloria Lavandera" mobile stores.

* * *

IN the world of commodity markets, of course, the behavior of oil prices could be more risqué than the interest of Kris Aquino.

It (behavior of oil prices) could rise up—or go lame—any second of the clock, depending on which side of the bed your mother-in-law woke up 28 years ago.

But still, everybody agrees that, in the long run, oil prices are bound to go up.

And this trend was predicted to be much worse than the oil crunch of the 1970s.

At that time, prices zoomed up because of the squeeze play in supply. The Opec then simply manipulated its members' oil production.

This time, the price push is coming from demand. The world just needs a lot of oil. Take a bow, China.

In the guessing game called commodity futures, oil prices may move up and down—albeit, temporarily—but in the long run, they are bound to stay UP, rather than down.

* * *

SINCE the heartless, merciless, cruel oil companies here raised prices, while oil softened abroad, this cute administration found a good reason to make them the villains.

This probably left viewers wondering, well, what was Gloriaetta doing about it? Would she send some people in the oil companies to jail?

To punish the overpricing, cheating, greedy vicious oil companies, the President of the Republic, in a decisive show of populist persuasion, went on television to ask questions. Beat that!

And so who said this cute airplane-chartering administration was helpless?

* * *

OF course, every political hanger-on cheered Gloriaetta for that best performance by the President of the Republic.

It was probably a decent recovery from this cute administration's rather embarrassing media performance a few days ago.

While Gloriaetta was taking a dip in Boracay, a former movie star called Susan Roces stole the show, accusing this cute administration of stealing the elections from her late husband, FPJ.

To return the compliment, the Palace spin-doctors said that Gloriaetta won in the last elections, because the world now recognized her as the President of the Republic.

If the logic of that statement escaped you, tough!

* * *

NOW we are assured that, contrary to what we grew up believing, elections are just a matter of whom the world perceives as the winner.

And so we can thank the stars that we have a world-perceived President of the Republic who leaves work in the nation's capital, goes out of town, and attends the ground-breaking of a hotel.

Well, that's why Gloriaetta is the "perceived" President of the Republic, and you are just the ignored taxpayer. She can go anytime to some hotel groundbreaking.

Such is the heavy burden of public office. Everybody wants you at groundbreakings as the country's Chief Executive.

"Executive" comes from the word "execute."

An executive executes programs and projects, such as—if it is not too much to ask—a concrete solution to the impending power crisis.

* * *

IN the Visayas and in Mindanao, they are already having a shortage of electricity. Soon, we will suffer the same thing in Luzon.

Even under the most optimistic scenario of this cute administration, we can expect a power shortage by 2008. Again, that's the official scenario.

In the private sector, however, things are not that optimistic. They are certain that the shortage will start in 2007.

And what are we doing? Well, basically, we are appearing on television to demonize a particular industry, just to make ourselves beautiful in the eyes of the public.

That's just one of the many burdens of public office, I guess.

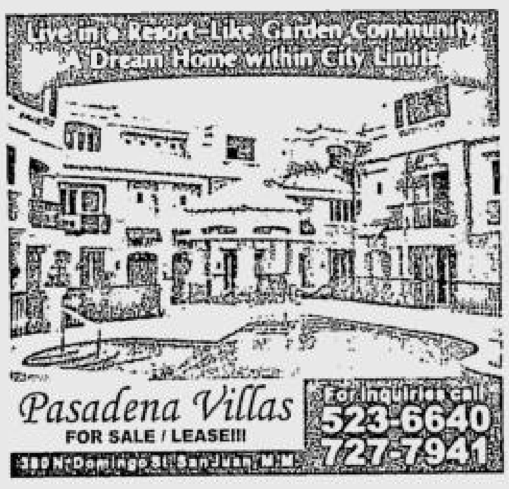
* * *

IN just a couple of years, when power failures start—AGAIN—the public will certainly rather pay through their teeth for power, than to have no power at all.

That may be the strategy of this cute administration. For why does it insist on waiting for the crisis to arise before it lifts a finger?

If the public becomes willing to accept any price of electricity, maybe this cute administration can get rid of its damaging, money-sapping power subsidy.

After we go through hell of long blackouts, the purgatory of high power bills may simply seem like heaven.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Public Notice

It has come to JPMorgan's attention that there has been a recent unauthorised internet employment solicitation and an offer of an associated Job Orientation Seminar, Training/IQ Testing, to be held at the Westin Philippine Plaza Hotel in Manila on April 25, 2005, naming JPMorgan as a prospective employer.

JPMorgan would like to make clear that it has no link whatsoever with any of these activities or claims.

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NHMFC

From page B1

have agreed to lend a combined $60 million for the acquisition of the loan portfolio and provide working capital for the Balikatan SPV.

DBGO plans to set up an organization with 300 to 400 employees to address the needs of the borrowers, more than the number of employees that NHMFC used to dedicate to these loans.

After the sale of these delinquent mortgage loans, NHMFC, through another asset management company (AMC), will initially continue to service and manage the remaining 140,000 loans of the UHLP portfolio plus an estimated 150,000 loans from the "community mortgage program."

"The board is evaluating various restructuring programs, geared for the remaining loan borrowers with the end in view of converting the moderately delinquent loan portfolio borrowers to low delinquent loan borrowers," Delos Angeles said.

The AMC, initially wholly owned by NHMFC, will eventually be converted into a privately controlled unit with the various shelter agencies staying as minority shareholder.

"We estimate this AMC to commence operation by the third quarter and with the approval of the Office of the President, to be privatized by the fourth quarter of this year," Delos Angeles said. *Doris C. Dumlao*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of April 22, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	27,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	25.5	26.5	25.5	26.5	170,500
Bank of the Phil. Islands	48	49	48	48.5	2,073,400
China Banking Corp.	655	655	655	655	300
Citystate Savings Bank	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	1,000
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.7	0.71	0.68	0.7	5,270,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	46.5	47	46.5	47	2,200
International Exch. Bank	18	18.25	18	18 25	94,400
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	32	32.5	31.5	32	482,000
Philippine National Bank	31	31.5	31	31.5	89,500
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	13	13	13	13	4,800
Security Bank Corp.	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	232,800
Union Bank of the Phil.	28.5	29	28.5	29	400
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	1.9	1.92	1.9	1.92	46,000
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.06	1.06	1.04	1.04	781,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1630	1650	1630	1645	940
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	14.5	14.5	14.25	14.5	17,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.06	1.1	1.06	1.1	5,681,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	830	850	830	850	64,470
Ipeople Inc.	4	4.2	4	4.1	33,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	800,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.06	2.1	2.06	2.1	44,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.15	3.2	3.15	3.2	1,755,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1355	1380	1335	1335	262,810
Ivantage Corp.	0.68	0.68	0.68	0.68	300,000
Philweb Corp.	0.019	0.02	0.019	0.02	4,800,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	16.75	16.75	16.75	16.75	15,100
Manila Electric Co. B	23.75	23.75	23.5	23.5	454,000
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3	1,975,000
Petron Corp.	3.5	3.55	3.5	3.55	697,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.12	1.22	1.12	1.2	158,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.78	1.78	50,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	7	7	7	7	585,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.48	0.48	130,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.64	0.64	300,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	3	3.1	3	3.05	385,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.35	3.35	3.35	3.35	10,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	33.5	33.5	33.5	33.5	11,300
Jollibee Foods Corp.	28.5	28.5	28.5	28.5	43,700
San Miguel Corp. A	57.5	58	57.5	57.5	61,700
San Miguel Corp. B	82	82.5	82	82.5	28,300
Universal Robina Corp.	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	40,200
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	1,500,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	18,000,000
Ayala Corp.	6.9	7	6.9	7	6,357,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.44	0.44	0.44	0.44	130,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.25	4.25	4.2	4.2	30,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.04	0.043	0.04	0.043	4,300,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1.94	2.02	1.94	2	236,000
APC Group Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.32	0.35	3,050,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	5,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.41	0.42	0.41	0.42	60,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	13,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.5	15,500
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.17	0.18	0.17	0.175	3,520,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.02	8,440,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	340,000
CADP Group Corp.	1	1	1	1	1,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.235	0.24	0.235	0.24	1,740,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.33	0.34	0.33	0.34	1,000,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3	3.25	3	3.2	5,562,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	500,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	9	9	8.9	8.9	109,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	45.5	45.5	44.5	44.5	470,300
Global Equities Inc.	0.0975	0.0975	0.085	0.09	5,500,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	20,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	96,000
Macroasia Corp.	1.82	1.86	1.82	1.86	98,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.32	1.36	1.32	1.36	926,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.42	0.44	0.42	0.43	20,520,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	40,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.96	0.96	0.94	0.94	100,000
Solid Group, Inc.	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	50,000
SM Investments Corp.	246	247	243	247	1,235,280
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	1,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.235	0.24	0.23	0.23	65,510,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.25	0.27	0.25	0.27	150,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Active Alliance Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	10,000
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	7.7	7.7	7.6	7.6	13,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76	50,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.115	0.12	0.11	0.11	1,820,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.14	0.14	0 14	0.14	10,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1.16	1.2	1.16	1.18	9,385,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.92	0.93	0.92	0.92	560,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.52	1.6	1.52	1.6	2,672,000
Manila Jockey Club	3	3	3	3	11,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0 31	0 33	0.31	0.32	970,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp.(Pdr)	14.25	14.5	14.25	14.25	512,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series M	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series P	10.25	10 25	10.25	10.25	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	7.9	7.9	7.7	7.8	28,485,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.85	0.87	0.85	0.87	330,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.27	0.29	0.27	0.29	1,320,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	650,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	200,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.43	0.44	0.42	0.42	5,640,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.44	1.48	1.44	1.48	2,246,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.23	0.23	0.22	0.22	700,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	10,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	4.55	4.6	4.55	4.6	670,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	60,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.4	7 5	7.3	7.4	3,585,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	17,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5	5	5	5	10,000
Benguet Corp. A	7	7	7	7	5,000
Benguet Corp. B	20	20.5	20	20.5	5,600
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.34	0 34	0.33	0.33	2,110,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.38	0.38	0.36	0.36	7,860,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.016	0.017	0.016	0.016	34,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.023	0.024	0.023	0.023	99,700,000
Omico Corp.	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	14,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.99	0.99	0.98	0.98	760,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.14	1.16	1.14	1.16	2,225,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	37	37.5	36.5	37	116,100
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	10,000
OIL					
Interport Res. B	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	3,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	35,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.006	0.0065	0.006	0.0065	56,000,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	32,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.17	0.185	0.17	0.185	1,200,000

DISCLOSURES

COSMOS Bottling Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 12, 2 p.m. at the executive dining room of SMC head office complex, Mandaluyong City. Only stockholders of record as of April 1 are entitled to vote during the meeting.

* * *

JOSE Antonio Leviste resigned as director of **Semirara Mining Corp.**

* * *

ELECTED directors of **International Container Terminal Services Inc.** were Enrique Razon Jr., Eduardo Soriano, Jose Ibazeta, Stephen Paradies, Dante Santos, Andres Soriano III, Ernest Cuyegkeng, Ramon Alegre and Octavio Victor Espiritu.

* * *

PHILIPPINE National Bank will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 24, 8 a.m. at the ballroom, upper lobby of Century Park Sheraton, Malate, Manila. Stockholders of record as of April 25 will be entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

* * *

KEPPEL Philippines Properties Inc. moved its annual stockholders' meeting to June 16 from June 9.

* * *

VICTOR Kalaw was appointed member of **Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.**'s nomination and audit committees. Gerardo Herrera was appointed chair of the special committee of inspectors for the validation of proxies. ***Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

Finance pushes . . .

From page B1

of an excise tax on soft drinks, bottled water and juices, taxing the windfall profits of telecommunication companies, and taxing self-employed individuals in the same manner as corporate taxpayers.

The Arroyo administration is looking at P80 billion in additional revenues a year from legislative measures to achieve the goal of having a balanced budget on or before the President's term ends in 2010.

Europe delegation calls on NGOs, LGUs to submit project proposals

THE DELEGATION of the European Commission to the Philippines called on nonprofit organizations to submit proposals during its 6th Information Session on Funding Opportunities held on April 19 at the Dusit Hotel in Makati City.

More than P2.5 billion have been allocated for Philippine projects covering several fields, according to an EU news release.

Guy Platton, EU first secretary and head of contracts, said that since the EU held information sessions last year, 77 proposals have been turned in.

"The threshold for passing is higher," Platton said.

Last year, 24 proposals were submitted, but only four were approved, he added.

Among the programs that the EU is funding are economic cooperation, governance, strengthening of civil society, democracy and human rights, development and rehabilitation, decentralization, gender, health, the environment and enery, higher education and research. The programs' grants range from P1 million to P30 million.

Deadlines for submission of applications are June 9 and Sept. 12, 2005.

Proponents are encouraged to get details at the website www.delphl.cec.eu.int.

DOF heeds bankers' call to extend SPV law

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance has consented to the proposed extension of the Special Purpose Vehicle law, which provides tax incentives to transactions involving the sale of nonperforming assets.

But the DOF only favors a one-year extension, instead of the two-year extension being requested by the banking industry.

A finance official said the extension of a law should be shorter than its original validity. The official said the banks should have already sold a bulk of their non-performing assets during the two-year implementation of the SPV law.

The DOF has prepared a position paper on the issue and is set to present it to the Lower House.

Earlier, the House committee on ways and means approved a two-year extension of the SPV law. The bill will now have to win the approval of the House before it can be submitted to the Senate for deliberations.

The DOF at first opposed the extension of the SPV law. Officials were concerned that the extension of the law would affect the government's already weak revenue standing.

The finance official said that since the SPV law was first implemented two years ago, the government lost P700 million in potential tax revenue.

The law expired last April 12.

The finance official said that the lobby of the banking industry was strong in Congress. The DOF decided to give way, but only if the law was extended by one year.

According to the bankers, the two years set for the implementation of the SPV law were not enough to sell all their non-performing assets.

The SPV law was enacted in 2002, but the Bureau of Internal Revenue only issued the guidelines on tax incentives later in the middle of the year. The banks were not able to avail of the SPV incentives because of the delay.

The SPV law was supposed to address the problem of mounting non-performing loans that had been saddling the banking industry. The huge NPLs were said to affect the competitiveness of Philippine banks.

The Bankers Association of the Philippines said it needed the law extended for another two years to wipe out the bulk, if not all, of the banking industry's bad loans, currently pegged at P500 billion.

Last year, only about P26.5 billion of nonperforming assets were transferred through the SPVs.

Manila Water may buy into Maynilad

THE AYALA-LED water distributor Manila Water Co. Inc. said it has been approached by parties to make an investment in rival firm Maynilad Water Services Inc. of the Lopez Group.

Sherisa Nuesa, Manila Water chief finance officer, said that talks were still in the "preliminary" stage and refused to comment further.

Investment bank ING Group, representing undisclosed buyers, submitted a letter of intent to the Department of Finance, relaying an interest to acquire Maynilad.

According to sources, among the buyers ING is said to be representing are the Ayala Group and the World Bank's private sector arm International Finance Corp.

DMCI Holdings Inc. will pursue its bid for Maynilad despite the entry of a rival player, sources said.

Sources at Benpres Holdings, which owns 59 percent in Maynilad, said they were not aware of a new proposal.

DMCI earlier firmed up its plan to buy Maynilad, saying in its letter to Benpres that it would acquire "all shares of the water distributor if possible." *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

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E-mail: pr_science_health@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Cesar D. Mangawang**
Assistant Editor **Stella O. Gonzales**

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Einstein's legacy keeps expanding

By Joseph B. Verrengia
Associated Press

(Editor's note: April 18 was the 50th death anniversary of Einstein.)

HE stopped traffic on New York's Fifth Avenue like the Beatles and Marilyn Monroe. He could've been president of Israel or played violin at Carnegie Hall, but he was too busy thinking. Fifty years after his death, his shock of white hair and droopy mustache still symbolize genius.

Who else could it be but Albert Einstein?

Einstein remains the foremost scientist of the modern era. Looking back 2,400 years, only Newton, Galileo and Aristotle were his equals.

Around the world, universities are celebrating the 100th anniversary of Einstein's "miracle year" when he published five scientific papers in 1905 that fundamentally changed the world's grasp of space, time, light and matter. Only he could top himself about a decade later with his theory of general relativity.

His ideas launched a dazzling technological revolution that has generated more change in a century than in the previous two millennia.

Icon

Computers, satellites, telecommunication, lasers, television and nuclear power—and nuclear bombs—all owe their invention to ways in which Einstein peeled back the veneer of the observable world to expose a more complicated reality underneath.

And, he launched an intellectual quest for a single coherent law that governs the universe. Einstein said such a unified super theory of everything, still unwritten, would enable us to "read the mind of God."

Einstein transcends mere genius and has become our culture's grandfatherly icon.

He escaped Hitler's Germany and devoted the rest of his life to humanitarian and pacifist causes with an authority unmatched by any scientist today, or even most politicians and religious leaders.

He used his celebrity to speak out against fascism and racial prejudice. By the time he died at age 76 on April 18, 1955, his FBI file ran 1,400 pages.

Eccentric

His letters reveal a tumultuous personal life—married twice and indifferent toward his children while obsessed with physics. Yet he charmed lovers and admirers with poetry and sailboat outings. Friends and neighbors fiercely protected his privacy.

And, yes, he was eccentric. With hair like that, how could he not be?

He never learned to drive. He would walk home from his office at Princeton University, sockless and submerged in the pursuit of the "eternal riddle," letting his umbrella rattle against the bars of an iron fence. If his umbrella skipped a bar, he would go back to the beginning of the fence and start over.

In those solitary moments, he unconsciously demonstrated the traits—intense concentration, disregard for fashion and innate playfulness—that would rescue him when, inevitably, he would be interrupted by presidents and passers-by to explain the universe.

"Once you can accept the universe as matter expanding into nothing that is something," Einstein once said, "wearing stripes with plaid comes easy."

Imagination vs knowledge

Early in the 20th century, Einstein spent his days working in the Swiss patent office in Bern. After hours, he would work furiously on his "thought experiments" that smashed through the limits of established physics.

"Imagination is more important than knowledge," Einstein said. "The important thing is to not stop questioning."

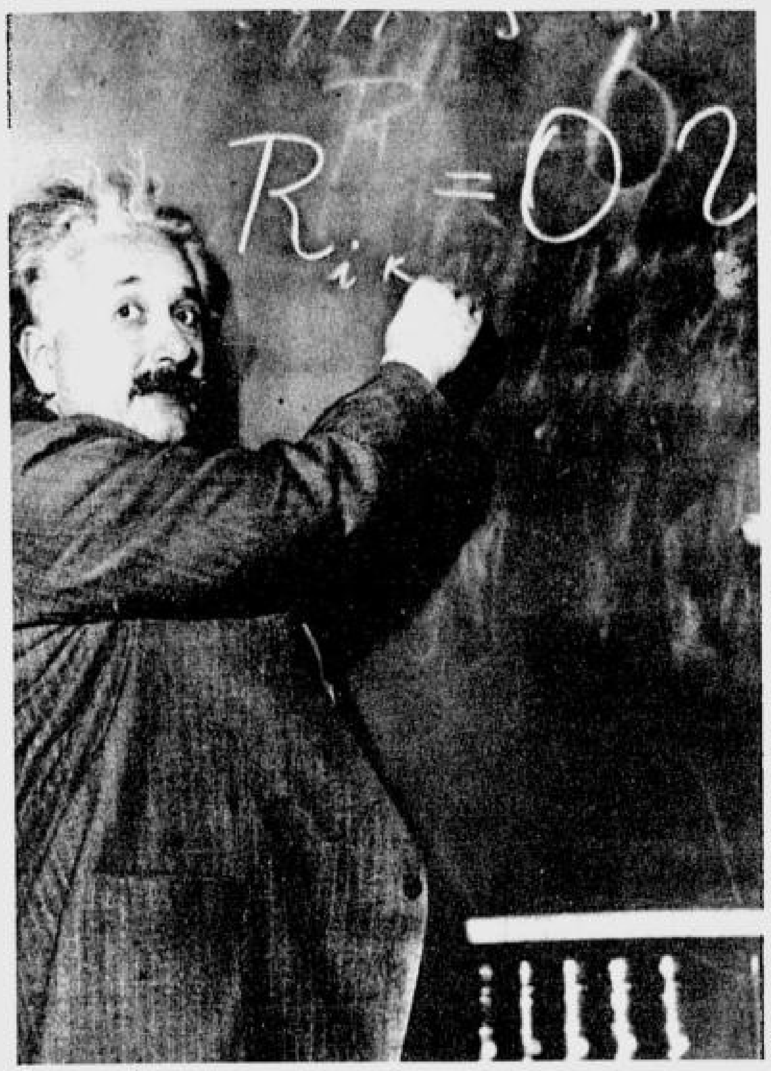
In 1905, he published five landmark papers without footnotes or citations. It marked the beginning of an unrivaled, two-decade intellectual burst.

Quantum theory

Here is a brief chronology of his miracle year:

March 1905: Conventional physics described light as a wave and could not explain how light can knock electrons off metal. Einstein showed that light is made of tiny packets of energy, or quanta, that can behave like individual particles, too.

This duality is the basis of quantum theory, a pillar of modern physics so paradoxical that even Einstein didn't entirely buy into it. His explanation of this "photoelectric effect" won him the Nobel prize in 1921.


ALBERT Einstein writes an equation for the density of the Milky Way on the blackboard at the Carnegie Institute, Mt. Wilson Observatory headquarters in Pasadena, California, in this Jan. 14, 1931 file photo. AP

April: Based on café conversations over tea, Einstein submits a paper that determined the size of sugar molecules by calculating their diffusion in the liquid.

May: He shows how particles (like pollen) that appear to be independently moving in water are being jostled by atoms in water that are moving chaotically. Known as Brownian motion, Einstein's calculations confirmed the atom's existence and by extension, the makeup of chemical elements.

Speed of light

June: Einstein's paper on "special relativity" separates him from the mainstream physics crowd. Newton considered gravity to be absolute—mass attracts mass. It's what makes gas and dust form stars and debris form planets.

But Einstein sought to explain anomalies in this rule. Scientists had concluded that light was just one of many kinds of electromagnetic waves moving through an unseen medium they called ether, and the speed of light is always the same.

Einstein recalled a teenage daydream of racing a light beam. According to the physics of his day, if he moved as fast as the light, then the beam would be stationary in space.

Einstein said the speed of light is constant at 186,282 miles per second. But it will appear different depending on where you are and how fast you are traveling.

$E=mc^2$

November: Einstein publishes an extension of special relativity regarding the conversion of mass into energy, noting that the "mass of a body is a measure of its energy content." In 1907, he abbreviated it to what would become science's most famous equation: The amount of energy equals mass times the speed of light squared, or $E=mc^2$.

Special relativity was incomplete because it did not deal with gravity. To Newton, gravity was a constant, absolute force. Drop an apple and it hits the ground. A planet traces a curved orbit because the sun's gravity tugs at the planet.

In Einstein's relative world, matter warps the time and space around it. So, the sun's mass dents and distorts the space-time fabric, curving the planet's trajectory.

He reasoned that even particles of light, which have very tiny mass, should be affected in this way.

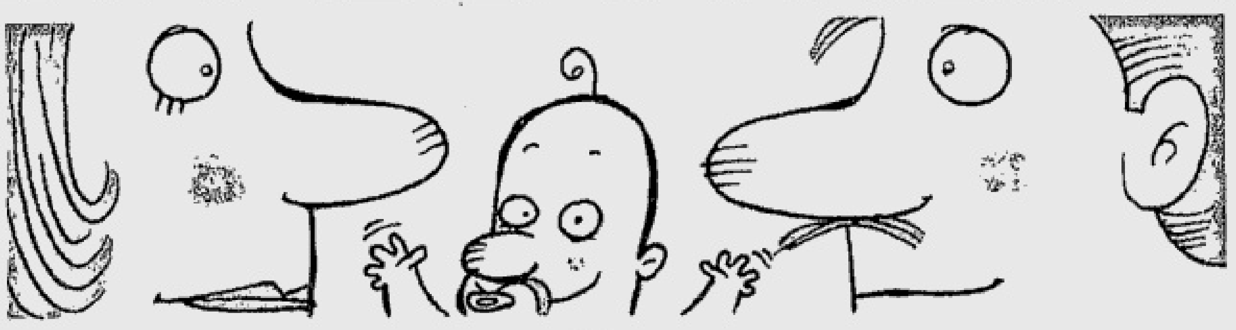
Simple explanation

In 1919, astronomers watching a solar eclipse observed the light from a distant star being deflected by the darkening sun's mass—by a few hundredths of a millimeter.

General relativity laid the foundation for all kinds of discoveries, such as the Big Bang, the expansion of the universe and black holes.

Yet relativity is both so profound and confounding that even other physicists have trouble grasping its nuances.

Einstein described relativity this way: "Put your hand on a hot stove for a minute, and it seems like an hour. Sit with a pretty girl for an hour, and it seems like a minute. That's relativity."



Sex really matters

DISCOVER

Massie Santos Ballon

"FINDING Nemo" was a great movie, not just because of the characters and the plot, but because of the attention to detail and accuracy with which life underwater was represented, at least, for the most part.

In the movie, Nemo was raised by his overprotective father Marlin after his mother was eaten. In real life, all clown fish start out as males and form small communities composed of 2-5 fishes. The largest fish in the group changes its sex and becomes the dominant female, who is also the only breeder. In the movie, then, Coral should have been bigger than Marlin.

If the female dies, the next largest fish in the group changes its sex to ensure the continuity of the community. In other words, if Marlin's community had been composed of more than just two fish, there's a chance he might have changed sex and given Nemo many more brothers and sisters.

The facts lead to an interesting question: Couldn't the clown fish have found a way to reproduce without raising the issue of gender identity?

For that matter, is sexual reproduction really even necessary? Why does the act of procreation for so many organisms, humans included, require the presence of two different genders? Why can't all living things asexually reproduce, like starfish and hydras do?

Scientists have been asking these questions for decades, with some pointing out that the sexual act involves a good deal of work, takes a lot of time, and the payoff isn't always satisfactory. Others counter that perhaps sex continues to be the preferred method of reproduction for so many species simply because of the challenge involved.

Reproducing asexually

Over a century ago, a German biologist named August Weismann theorized that sex was necessary because it increases the gene pool and thus allows natural selection to proceed more efficiently. By trying out all possible combinations of genes in a population, he argued, certain traits can be selected over others as having been proven necessary for an organism's survival.

The theory sounds good, but no one's been able to prove it.

Until now, that is.

In the March 31 issue of the journal Nature, biologist Michael Goddard and his colleagues from Imperial College London show that Weismann's theory works—in brewer's (also known as baking) yeast. When provided with enough nutrients, yeast normally reproduce asexually. However, under starvation conditions, the yeast diploid cells undergo meiosis and sporulate. The four spores then fuse and form diploid cells.

Goddard et al. worked with two identical-looking strains of yeast. The normal strain reproduced as described above, both sexually and asexually; the other was genetically developed in the lab and could only reproduce asexually whether or not there were enough nutrients provided.

Two environments

To prove that the constructed yeast strain would behave just like the normal strain except under starvation conditions, Goddard et al. exposed each of the two strains to two environments.

In the "benign" environment, the yeast's growth was limited only by the available concentration of glucose. In the "harsher" environment, the yeast were exposed to the same glucose concentration but the environmental temperature was raised from 30 degrees Celsius to 37 degrees Celsius, which caused stress.

After satisfactorily demonstrating that the yeast strains had similar growth rates under both conditions—76 percent plus 4 percent for the "sexual" strain vs. 73 percent plus 4 percent for the "asexual" strain—the researchers exposed both strains to starvation conditions.

Here the difference between the strains became clear: the population of the normal yeast strain that reproduced sexually increased by 94 percent but the asexual strain's growth rate was only 80 percent. The conclusion: sex is an important survival factor.

The results, as intriguing as they are, only raise more questions. Goddard et al.'s work does not explain why the wild-type, "sexual" strain adapts to the harsher environment better than the "asexual' constructed yeast strain.

Also, the paper does not supply the definitive answer why so many species reproduce sexually. While yeast is a great model organism, it does not have male and female genders, so it doesn't accurately represent many species, including humans.

This is the next challenge in proving Weismann's theories, the researchers note in their paper. Maybe when this challenge is taken up, researchers will finally be able to explain just why clown fish reproduce the way they do.

E-mail the author at massie@massie.com.

Carmen Velasquez, National Scientist

EUREKA!

Queena N. Lee-Chua

LAST week, in response to the request of a reader for detailed information about Doctors Gregorio and Carmen Velasquez, we looked at the life, work and achievements of the former. The Velasquez couple was the only husband-and-wife team who both became National Scientists—he in 1982, she a year later. (I acknowledge the article of Emerita R. Barile in the book "National Scientists of the Philippines" from where much of the information below is derived.)

Dr. Carmen Velasquez was best known for her studies of tropical fish parasitology. Her findings have contributed much to understanding the relationship of fish parasitology to conservation, aquaculture management and public health.

She was born on Aug. 7, 1913 in Bayambang, Pangasinan, but grew up in Dagupan City. She completed elementary studies at the Dagupan Elementary School and high school at the Centro Escolar University in Manila. She graduated in 1934 with a degree in BS Zoology from the University of the Philippines Diliman. Like her husband, she received her master's degree in zoology from the University of Michigan in 1937. She was the first Ph.D. holder in parasitology at UP in 1957.

She became a visiting professor at the University of Maryland in 1958 and in 1963. She stayed in UP Diliman until eventually becoming professor emeritus upon retirement.

Role of fisheries

Due to the influence of an American mentor, Dr. George LaRue, Dr. Velasquez decided to concentrate on parasitology. She was also conscious about the importance of this topic to our country.

"Dr. Velasquez perceived the impact of a growing population on the country's available natural resources. A growing population meant more pressure to optimize the use of these resources to meet the basic needs of the people. Fisheries, particularly aquaculture, she believed, was destined to play a crucial role in the dietary requirements of the people.

"But she was also aware of the problems of fish parasites that could affect fish yield and consequently, conservation and public health. Majority of human diseases and parasites originated as diseases and parasites of animals. Through her studies on the life cycles of parasites infesting fish, such as the study of the parasite itself, its structure, habitat, ecology...the most vulnerable points in a parasite's life could be broken. Knowledge of the means of entry or transmission of parasites is important for the control and prevention of transfer of disease-producing worms from animals to man and vice versa."

Papers

She wrote 47 basic and 45 important scientific papers, and the groundbreaking work "Digenetic Trematodes of Philippine Fishes," the first of its kind in Southeast Asia. She studied in great detail the trematodes, cestodes, nematodes and copepad.

She made astounding discoveries: 32 species and one genus of digenetic trematodes, 13 families of Philippine food fishes, two of birds and three of mammals, five species and a genus of Monogenea of marine fishes, nine life cycles of Digenea in seven families and three of nematodes from freshwater and marine fishes, and the famous *Capillaria philippinensis* (from the intestine of man in Ilocos Sur).

For her accomplishments, she received many awards, including the Distinguished Service Medal and Diploma of Honor from the Republic of the Philippines in 1965, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship in 1957 to 58 and 1963, the UP Alumni Association Professional Award in 1973, the National Science Development Board outstanding published works in 1972 and 1973, and the Outstanding Women in Science in the Philippines at the 9th Unesco Biennial Conference in 1975.

Dr. Velasquez passed away on Oct. 16, 1994.

* * *

To promote the contribution of young women in research around the world, L'Oreal once again works with Unesco to offer 15 fellowships in the life sciences ("For Women in Science"). Candidates not more than 35 years old must be pursuing research at the doctoral or postdoctoral level in biology, biochemistry, physiology, biotechnology or other allied fields. Chosen candidates will receive a grant (maximum $20,000), and roundtrip airfare, lodging, and pocket money for the Paris awards ceremony in 2006. Deadline for applications is Sept 15, 2005. For more information, go to http://portal.unesco.org/en or e-mail Leica Carpo of L'Oreal Philippines (lcarpo@ph.loreal.com).

Drug patent law favors high cost of medicines–gov't trading firm

By Tessa R. Salazar

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEPH BRAVO

"IT IS not bad to earn profit, but if more than half of the people die without having access to medicines simply because they are so damned expensive, it is highly anomalous, if not criminal."

This was how Philippine International Trading Corp. president and chair Roberto M. Pagdanganan described the Philippine drug market. He pointed out that 80 to 90 percent of all medicines sold in the country are already off-patent but are still being sold at exorbitant prices.

"Off-patent" means that the patent of a drug has expired. In other countries, the price of a drug drops after its patent expires because the drug company no longer holds exclusive manufacturing rights over the drug.

"The Philippines, unfortunately, is one of the countries where even if the patents have expired, the branded products are still expensive," Pagdanganan lamented.

When asked about a statement by Leo Wasmer, executive vice president and chief executive officer of the Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP) that it took $1 billion to develop a drug, Pagdanganan said that is the reason for the patent law.

"Research and development are specifically encouraged and supported by patent laws. They have exclusive rights to manufacture and market it. And we're talking of about 20 years," Pagdanganan told the INQUIRER.

But he asked why drugs whose patents have expired for so many years remain expensive.

Why prices remain high

According to the PITC, medicine prices are significantly higher in the Philippines for the following reasons: the patents are given by products, not by process; extravagant marketing costs; "cartelized" prices or supply situation; medicines are not among price-controlled goods; and drug prices are unchanged despite their lapsed patents.

Pagdanganan said that in India, which has liberalized its patent system, patents are process-based, not brand-based. As a result, drug prices there are five to six times lower than those sold in the Philippines.

"Why is there no [drug] smuggling in India? It is not profitable to smuggle there. Smuggling becomes [feasible] when some are selling at exorbitant prices as it is happening in the Philippines," said Pagdanganan.

Quality control

PITC executive vice president Teddie Elson E. Rivera said 20,000 local manufacturers in India were given certified good manufacturing practices (CGMP) seals. In the Philippines, about 50 manufacturers have a CGMP seal.

CGMP is an international standard where facilities and quality control is established.

Pagdanganan said the PITC, through the government's parallel importation program, buys only from top Indian companies with CGMP.

It is PITC's job to reduce by half over the next five years the cost of medicines commonly used by the poor.

Fake drugs

Pagdanganan said the PITC is also working with the Bureau of Food and Drug in running after fake drug manufacturers.

PHAP's Wasmer has alleged that manufacturers of fake drugs have been taking advantage of the government's parallel importation program by selling fake drugs and labeling them "Made In India."

But Pagdanganan said that since the 1970s, when parallel importation was not yet in place, counterfeit and smuggled medicines were already proliferating.

"The manufacturers of fake drugs have been there for the longest time. [The Philippines] has become attractive for smugglers because of the exorbitant prices," Pagdanganan pointed out.

Parallel importation, Pagdanganan explained, is not the long-term solution of the government to high drug prices.

"The long-term solution is to source [drugs] locally. We'd like to see local pharmaceutical businesses in the marketing and distribution, as well as manufacturing aspects strengthened. We would like to develop the distribution system and the market network and give encouragement to the local manufacturers, then we can bring the prices down," he said.

He said both parallel importation and the strict implementation of generics law are important. He encourages drug companies to support the government in enforcing the Generics Law.

Does aggressive cholesterol-lowering make sense?

By Rafael R. Castillo, MD

MEDICAL FILES

ROLANDO Arcadio from Cebu City e-mailed me to ask: "Why do I have to keep on taking my anticholesterol drug when my lab tests show that my cholesterol levels are okay? My doctor says that because I'm diabetic, he has to be aggressive in bringing down my cholesterol to lower than normal levels. Does that make sense?"

That certainly makes a lot of sense. Even if they have no symptoms or have no apparent cardiovascular problems, diabetics are at high-risk at developing heart attacks, strokes and other cardiovascular complications. They have the same risk as someone who already had a heart attack. Thus, diabetes by itself is now considered as a coronary heart disease (CHD) equivalent. Many even label diabetes as a cardiovascular disease.

Recent scientific data show that patients with coronary heart disease who took statins—which are potent anticholesterol drugs—and lowered their bad-cholesterol (low-density lipoprotein, or LDL) to well below recommended levels, experienced significantly fewer heart attacks and strokes than those who only lowered their cholesterol to recommended levels. This was recently presented during the annual meeting of the American College of Cardiology in Florida.

The five-year Treating to New Targets Trial (TNT) involved 10,000 patients with established coronary heart disease and elevated LDL-cholesterol levels. The study assessed if patients who aggressively lowered their LDL-cholesterol levels to well below the current guidelines (100 mg/dL) would experience additional cardiovascular benefits compared to those who maintained their LDL-cholesterol at recommended levels.

Patients whose bad-cholesterol levels were aggressively lowered had 22 percent fewer cardiovascular events, including CHD death, nonfatal heart attacks, resuscitated cardiac arrest, and fatal or nonfatal strokes compared to those whose cholesterol levels were lowered only to recommended guideline levels. An additional benefit of aggressive lowering was a 25 percent fewer fatal or nonfatal strokes.

Several other previous studies, including the landmark Heart Protection Study, have shown that maintaining high-risk patients, particularly diabetics, on another type of statin conferred meaningful clinical benefits that can save a diabetic patient from permanently disabling cardiovascular complications. In fact, even diabetics with normal cholesterol levels benefited from cholesterol-lowering therapy.

Narrowing of arteries

Diabetics, however, have a peculiarly worse form of cholesterol problem guaranteed to accelerate the atherosclerosis process, or the progressive narrowing of the arteries. It's called atherogenic diabetic dyslipidemia. It does not only consist of an elevated bad-cholesterol, but is compounded by elevated triglycerides and a low level of the good, or high-density lipoprotein (HDL), cholesterol.

Statins may not be sufficient if all the components of diabetic dyslipidemia are present. Other classes of drugs such as the fibrates and nicotinic acid may be needed. When used properly, the combination of these drugs has been shown to be safe, with only isolated reports of the side-effects in the muscles which was why one of the statin brands was pulled out of the market several years ago.

How long should diabetics and other high-risk patients take their cholesterol-lowering drugs? Based on the results of clinical trials, it takes several years—at least three years—before clinically meaningful benefits could be appreciated. But in practical terms, for as long as the patient could afford it—considering the cost of this class of drugs—he should keep taking it.

But if it's beyond one's means, squeezing the cost of cholesterol-lowering therapy into one's tight budget for a week or two, or even for a few months, will probably make no sense. Investing one's meager funds on aspirin will probably make more sense.

My, what white teeth you have!

By Charles E. Buban

WITH THE GREAT majority of television and movie celebrities sporting blinding-white smiles, it's no wonder why many people these days are being convinced to also have such amazing white smiles.

For these people, having white teeth is sort of a symbol of health.

"Also, it's a simple way to feel good about themselves," says Dr. Cherrie Anne Cruz, a consultant at Perfect Smile Professional Teeth Whitening Salon in Makati.

Cruz says the business of cosmetic dentistry is starting to get some attention in the Philippines.

"Apparently, television and cable shows that make over a person's appearance have something to do with all this sudden awareness—they are causing consumers to be conscious of what's possible today in cosmetic dentistry," she says.

Yellowish

Cruz says our teeth are not naturally white. She explains that the insides of teeth are mostly made up of dentine, which is yellowish in color.

"This dentine is surrounded by a protective white layer called enamel. But because the white enamel is not opaque [but slightly translucent], part of the yellowness of the dentine underneath shows through," Cruz says.

Also, the yellowing or the dulling of our teeth's color is an unavoidable change that happens as the teeth age.

Another factor, according to Cruz, is the pigment present in some food and drinks that can stain teeth over time.

"These pigments—like in coffee and tea—attach to the enamel and may even find its way into the cracks, making teeth even more darker with time. Smoking cigarettes and using other tobacco products have the same effect," she says.

Whiteners

Cruz says there are many "teeth whiteners" available in the market—from toothpastes to gels—that could reverse this process.

Most of these use the same basic ingredient: hydrogen peroxide (the same stuff used to bleach hair) or carbamide peroxide (a more viscous, easier-to-handle form of hydrogen peroxide) to lighten stains and brighten the teeth's natural coloring.

Cruz warns that some of these over-the-counter products are acidic or may contain concentrations that may damage the teeth (by eroding the enamel), so it's best to seek professional advice before using one.

"Generally, the quicker the method of bleaching [some take as short as one hour], the more expensive it is. The more affordable methods are designed to be used for a much longer period since they mostly contain a much weaker concentration of the whitening ingredient," says Cruz.

For those who want the quickest way to having white teeth, there is the accelerated procedure known as laser whitening.

"Laser whitening is the process of removing discoloration or stains from the enamel and the hard tissue under it," says Cruz.

The treatment, which takes less than an hour, involves the application of a gel to the teeth, which is then activated by a gas-plasma light.

The light interacts with the gel to break up the stains in the subsurface portions of the tooth. The subsequent chemical reaction dissolves the stain without affecting the enamel of the tooth.

Whitest potential

"When combined with good dental hygiene and personal at-home maintenance, the teeth can achieve their whitest potential through this one-time procedure," says Cruz.

The only disadvantages are the sudden change in the teeth's color, which is likely to be noticed by those around the person, and the fact that this procedure costs around P20,000.

But price would be the least concern for people who will do whatever they can to get an edge. And sometimes it's the sparkle in their smile that could spell the difference.

Nonconventional medicine gaining the glory it deserves

WHAT used to be alternative is now going mainstream.

From herbal cure to acupuncture and acupressure to pranic healing, nonconventional medicine is now gaining wider acceptance among Filipinos.

Even our age-old practice of "hilot" is now gaining recognition. Medical professionals are seeing science in this practice.

Safe, effective practices

Dr. Alfonso Lagaya, medical director of Living Life Well Medical Spa and Complementary Alternative Clinic incorporates the practices of Filipino folk healers with western conventional medicine, traditional Chinese acupuncture, acupressure and pranic healing in his treatments.

Says Dr. Lagaya: "These are safe and effective practices that are actually based on the body's meridians or energy channels. The body's vital energy, called chi or qi circulates through these channels that have branches to bodily organs and functions. Illness is a result of imbalances or interruption of chi."

Dr. Lagaya did extensive studies on the healing rituals and practices of the Filipino folk healers all over the country. He has also trained Filipino physicians on acupuncture and introduced energy healing to government physicians in different regions while he was director general of the Department of Health's Philippine Institute of Traditional and Alternative Health Care (Pitahc).

Musculo-skeletal disorders such as headaches, migraines, colds, anxiety, nervousness, chronic fatigue, stiff neck, scoliosis and lower back pain are just some of the pains that can be cured using nonconventional medicine. Even specific organ chronic disorders like hypertension, peptic ulcer diseases, irritable bowel syndrome, chronic constipation, bronchial asthma and functional omnipotence can even find relief outside conventional, allopathic, western medicine.

Nontraditional

Acupressure and acupuncture are ancient Chinese techniques that relieve pain by stimulating the meridian points of the body. By activating pressure points, the brain releases natural pain killers called endorphins, which go directly to the places that need pain relief.

Another form of nontraditional medicine is pranic healing. Prana is a Sanskrit word that means life force, which is also known as chi or qi.

The basic concept of pranic healing is that the body is a self-repairing entity. Energy is focused in the part of the body that is suffering.

"Hilot" treats patients through massage on parts of the body where there is "lamig" or in Chinese traditional medicine, imbalance of energies.

Even with modern medicine, these treatment practices are still present and people who have experienced it confirm its effectiveness. And the fact is, it is.

2-hour treatment

This is the reason Dr. Lagaya developed the Lagaya Meridian Therapy: a two-hour treatment being offered in Living Life Well that combines the safe and effective practices of Filipino folk healers with acupressure, acupuncture and pranic healing.

In this treatment, patients are given a comprehensive assessment of body energies using computer-aided traditional Chinese medical diagnosis, which determines the particular body area of pain and weakness, time of the day most stressed, time of sleeping and waking and particular meridian points requiring acupressure and acupuncture.

The treatment begins with an herbal therapeutic footbath to clear the energy meridians of the feet, followed by the comprehensive ARDK diagnosis. After that, the corresponding medical acupressure and acupuncture are applied. Last is the pranic energy healing.

Positive testimonies

With barely three months of service, Living Life Well already has a lot of positive testimonies confirming the effectiveness of the treatment. One patient confided that the treatment has relieved her of shoulder pains troubling her for years. Others are relieved to find out what has been causing the pains they experience in some parts of their body.

A lot of the patients who have come to Living Life Well are adults who find it a relief that they can now combine the benefits of modern medicine and nontraditional treatments in healing them, under the able guidance of a medical professional.

While these kinds of treatments are not widely taught in medical schools or not generally used in hospitals, the growing acceptance of Filipinos and the establishments of clinics like Living Life Well gives a more positive outlook for this sector. In the end, the patients win because of the more choices available for them.

For more information about nonconventional healing, Living Life Well conducts regular trainings. It can be reached at 826-4733 or 0917-8020460.

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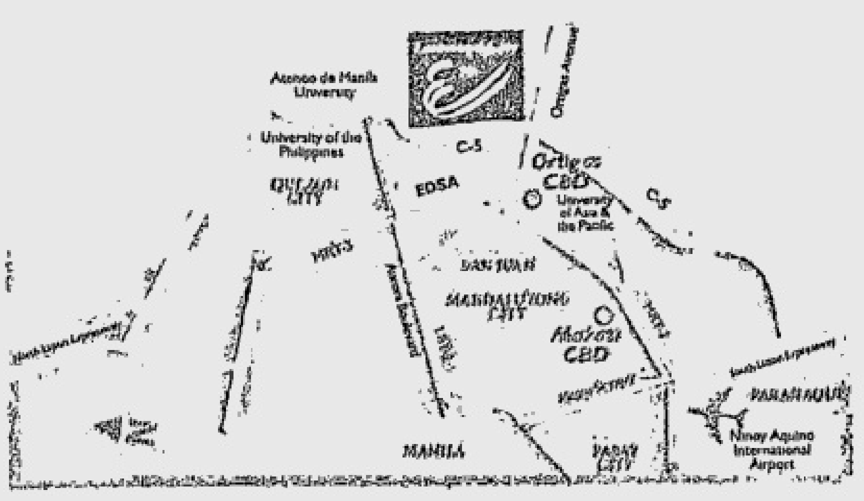
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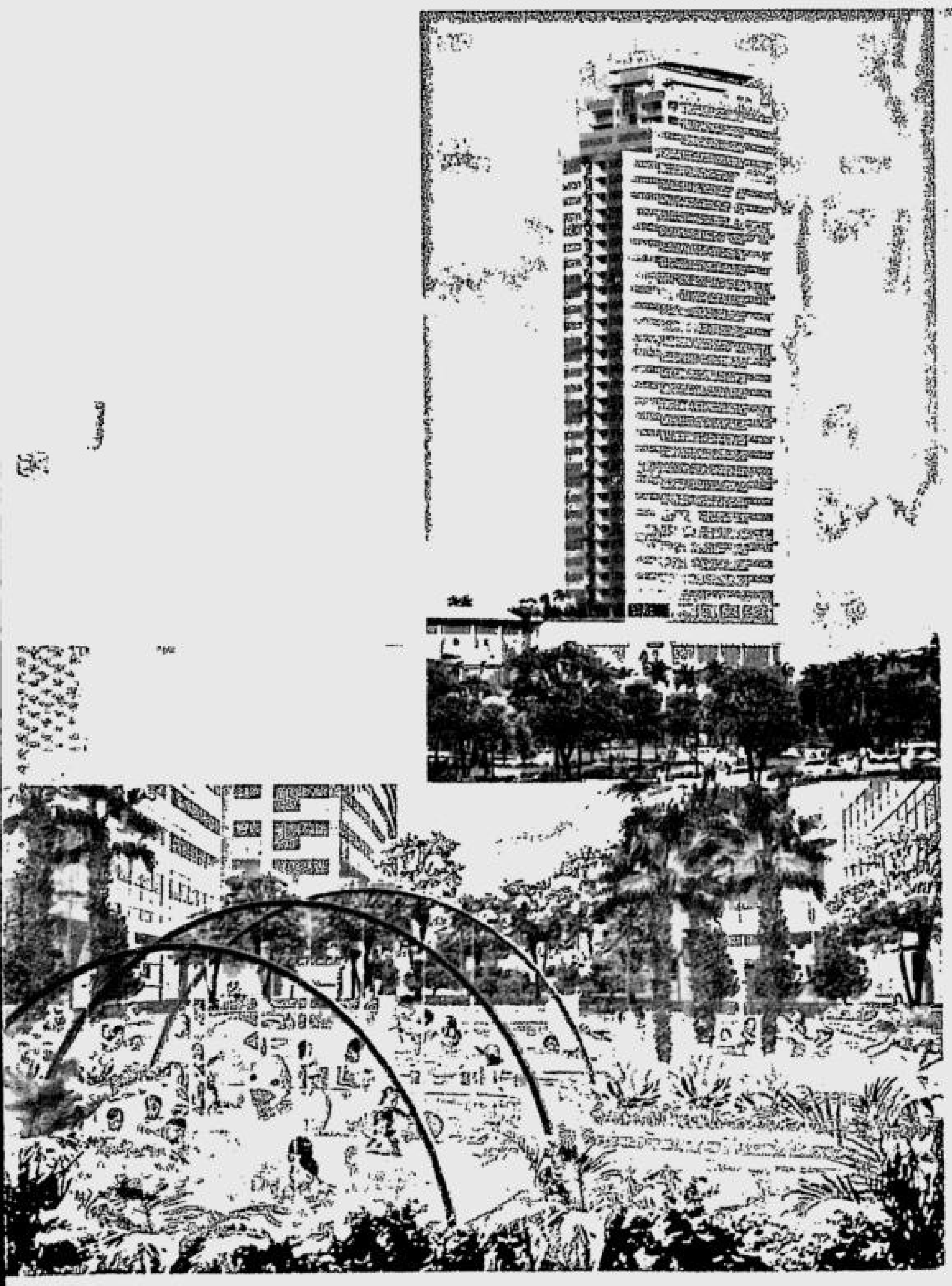

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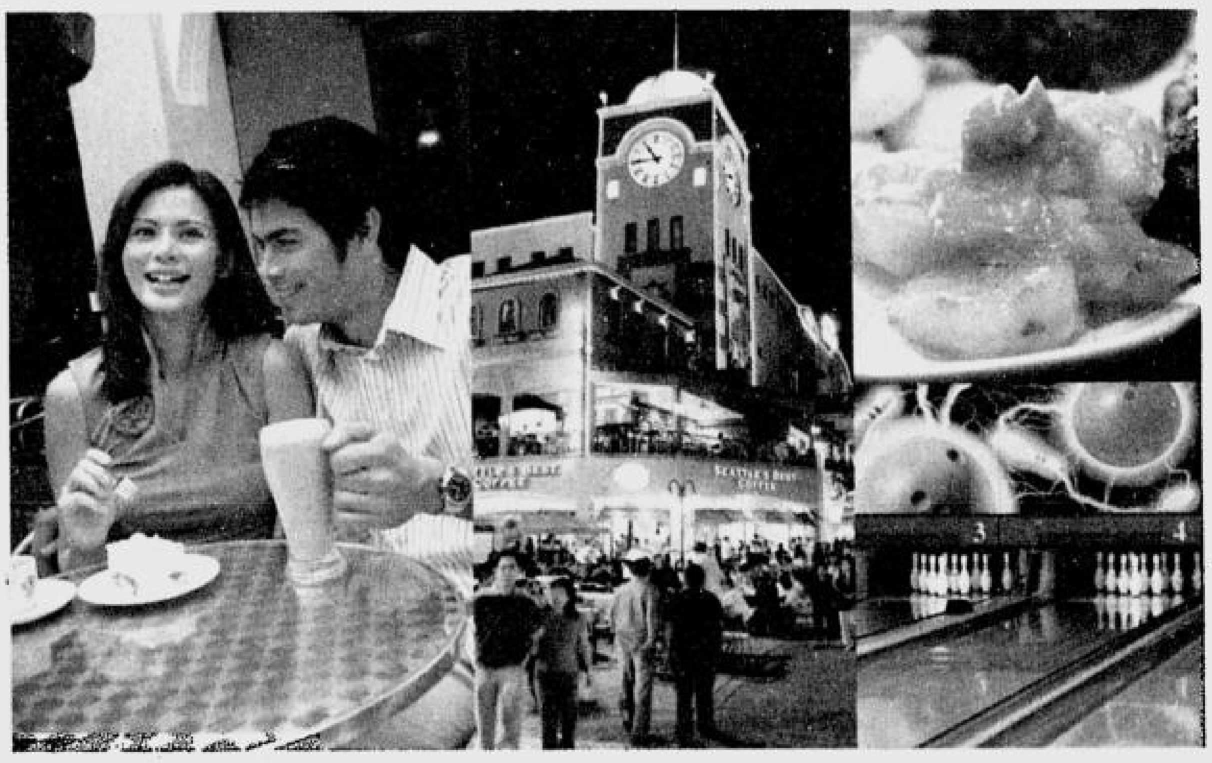

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PILAR LANDRITO ULANDAY

"Nanay Conching"

October 17, 1918 – April 21, 2005

Alabang, Muntinlupa City

Died in the grace of our Lord on April 21, 2005. Her beloved husband, **Rodolfo** (†); children **Jacinto** and **Myrna**, **Victor**, **Cecilia** and **Rollie**, **Butch** and **Thelma**, **Yollie** and **Bobby**, **Albert** and **Elena**, **Ismael** (†); grandchildren, great grandchildren, relatives and friends request prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at La Funeraria Paz, Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque City.

Interment will be at Everest Memorial Park, April 24, 2005, after the 2:00 p.m. Mass at San Roque Catholic Parish Church in Alabang, Muntinlupa City.

In Memoriam

GODOFREDO "FRED" C. VILLAREAL, JR.

(November 21, 1938 - April 23, 2004)

Dear Lord,

A full year has passed since You called back into your bosom, our beloved Papa and Your son, Fred.

Though we, Fred's devoted wife, Fidelia "Ely" Puno, his children, Atty. Maria Trinidad Leonor "Leny", Manuel Arsenio Ramon Claro "Marc", Maria Aurora "Aura", and Maria Victoria Antoinette "Maan", still feel the deep pain of Fred's loss, we have accepted Fred's death, believing that Fred now rests peacefully in Your heavenly Kingdom, and that each of us will one day be reunited with Fred, according to Your plan.

We thank You Almighty Lord, for the special gift to us that was Fred... for the privilege to have been loved and cared for by him in his brief, but very meaningful earthly existence.

We are especially thankful to all of those who had been with us in our moments of bereavement, and who continue to remember Fred and our family in their prayers. The overwhelming show of love and support has kept our family stronger and humbler, with the realization that basic human goodness will shine through, in these, the roughest of times.

We exalt You Lord and express our profoundest gratitude for all that You have given us, including our precious Fred. May we be worthy of such love and trust, in honor of Your Most Holy Name, and in honor of Fred's legacy to us, his still grieving family.

The Family of the late Fred C. Villareal, Jr.

"Nada te turbe, nada te espante.
Todos se pasa. Dios no se muda."
St. Therese of Avila

In Loving Memory of

TRINIDAD CASAS CUYEGKENG, Ed.D.

01 March 1922 – 23 April 2004

on her First Death Anniversary

We, her children, grandchildren
and great grandchildren,
and sister, **Carmen Casas Manabat**,
thank all of you who continue to carry
Momsey in your prayers.

MA. ELIZABETH A. SANTOS-CORREA

Peacefully joined our Creator
on April 21, 2005 at the age of 49.

Her loving husband **Albert** and brave children **Albert Chase, Derick & Elyza**; loving mother **Olympia Acuña Vda de Santos**; with her brothers & sisters, nieces & nephews request the pious readers to join them in praying for her eternal peace in heaven.

Her body lies in state at Sto. Domingo Church, Quezon Avenue QC until today, April 23, 2005 and will be transferred to San Ildefonso, Bulacan on April 24, 2005.

Interment will be on Wednesday, April 27, 2005 after the 2:00PM Mass.

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones, the following establishments can help you.

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OBITUARIES

In Loving Memory
On the First Death Anniversary of

ATTY. FRANCISCO LOPEZ SANTOS

Assistant Chief State Prosecutor (Ret.)
Department of Justice
San Jose City, Nueva Ecija

March 25, 1935 - April 23, 2004

His loving wife **Dr. Evangelina Chiong Santos**; children **Atty. Eric** and **Pros. Beth**, **Arch. Samuel** and **Gemma**, **Atty. Oswaldo** and **Gaylyn**, **Atty. Nathaniel** and **Dr. Plum**, **Dr. Frances Christine** and **Dr. Ben Ramon Espiritu**; grandchildren, brothers, sister, relatives and friends request pious readers to join in prayer for the eternal repose of his soul.

Holy Mass will be held today at 4:30 p.m. at the Heritage Park, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila, and at the following churches:

Sanctuario de San Jose, Greenhills, San Juan	6:15 AM
Mt. Carmel Parish, New Mla, QC	7:00 AM
Immaculate Conception Parish Cathedral, Cubao, QC	7:00 AM

"Nada le falta
Dios solo basta"
Teresa de Avila

In Loving Memory of

Trinidad Casas Cuyegkeng

March 1, 1922 – April 23, 2004

How I miss my dearest Grandma, especially now that summer is here. I will always remember the times we spent together. And to all of those who knew her, and generously shared her life with us, please remember my Grandma fondly and keep her close in your prayers always.

Thank you,
Monica Trinidad C. Lualhati

"Together in our hearts, Together forever - Big Trining & Little Trining"

Dearly Beloved

JUANITO CHAN ONG

(June 27, 1939 – April 19, 2005)

of the City of Manila

widow of Mrs. LUCIA LEE ONG

Peacefully joined our Lord at the age of 66.

His bereaved children **Jason** and **Ann Gianinna**, **Jerry**, **Jersey** and **Leanne Jane** request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the La Funeraria Paz in Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

Interment will be at the Chinese Crematory, City of Manila on April 24, 2005 at 9:00 a.m.

We design OBITUARIES for free.

CARMEN SAGARBARRIA VDA DE NOEL

Peacefully joined our Lord on April 20, 2005 at the age of 90.

Her loving children, MERCEDES, EDUARDO JR., RAMON; grandchildren request relatives, friends and pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in Saint Aquinas Chapel, San Juan.

Interment will be on Sunday, April 24, 2005, 10:00 a.m. at LA LOMA CEMETERY.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

John 3:16

Message of Thanks

The family of

DOLORES SANTOS BUNAG

April 03, 1925 – March 20, 2005

wishes to express their deep gratitude and sincerest appreciation to all those who have condoled and comforted them in their hour of bereavement.

CLASSIFIEDS

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SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM
East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City
Tel. Nos. (632) 920-6401 • (632) 920-6446
E-mail: sssemail@info.com.ph • Web site http://www.sss.gov.ph

NOTICE

Please get in touch with the Members Assistance Center, Social Security System (SSS), East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City or at any SSS office nearest your place of residence and file your death benefit claim within 90 days upon publications, if you are:

NAME OF BENEFICIARIES	LAST KNOWN ADDRESS	NAME OF SSS MEMBER	DATE OF DEMISE
1) Vicente Abella	Unknown	Leonila P. Abella SS # 06-0632807-6	March 6, 2001
2) Lovely Pangalay	Unknown	Richard M. Alcantara SS # 06-1811904-0	October 6, 2004
3) Ninia Areglado	Aklan	Julio Areglado SS # 07-0267512-8	March 30, 2004
4) Carmelita Arroyo	Unknown	Melchor Arroyo SS # 09-0380967-0	September 11, 2004
5) Elvira Apawan	Unknown	Jaime Bayot SS # 07-0338087-3	June 17, 2004
6) Canuto U. Cantos	Unknown	Angel Cantos SS # 03-1389200-2	July 24, 2004
7) Sofia Ro-Mar	Sta Maria, Zamboanga City	Roberto D. Carlos SS#10-0124032-1	August 4, 2004
8) Luz Roque Gajes Reagan Paul Duran	Unknown	Leonardo Duran SS#07-1122998-9	February 27, 1999
9) Dolores Barcenal	Unknown	Pablo Empis SS#09-0097446-9	December 25, 2003
10) Cecilia Parole Normandy Jasminez Jr. Nary Anne	57 CM Recto, Parang, Marikina, MM	Normandy R. Jasminez SS#03-3936639-2	November 21, 2004
11) Dolores Acdon	San Juan, Gen. Trias, Cavite	Felino F. Manicio SS#03-1840673-6	July 29, 2004
12) Editha de Veyra	Antipolo, Bagong Nayon 1, Antipolo, Rizal	Dominador R. Merino SS#06-0190940-3	November 10, 2004
13) Marylyn F. Miano	Vitalez Comp. Isidro, Sucat Rd., P'que	Benjamin O. Miano SS#33-5055333-0	November 7, 2004
14) Macaria Monarba	Unknown	Fortunato Monarba SS#03-2790247-0	December 7, 2004
15) Catalina Mosca	C/O Margarito Mosca Tijaro, Brgy. III, Tanauan, Leyte	Arnulfo Piad SS#33-3608712-1	April 27, 1997
16) Ester Resurreccion	142 Vinchy St. Tanada Subd., Valenzuela, Metro Manila	Manuel C. Resurreccion SS#03-1197949-3	February 5, 2005
17) Romnick Sumeguin	Manila	Cenon Sumeguin SS#01-0667256-5	August 30, 2004
18) Fortunata/Marita Gulfan Tubay	Unknown	Conrado P. Tohay SS#03-6742600-8	August 23, 2004
19) Ingrid Villarin	Tabaco City, Albay	Antonio P. Villarin SS#03-5026889-1	April 11, 1996

(PDI - April 23, 2005)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM
East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City
Visit the SSS website for Bid Invitations

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY & TO BID

CARGO FORWARDING SERVICES & VARIOUS COMPUTER EQUIPMENT

The **SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM** is inviting bidders to apply for eligibility & to bid for the following:

1. Two-year contract for the hiring of Cargo Forwarding Services to handle the pick-up and delivery of SSS cargoes and other materials to and from various points of destinations and origins nationwide.
   Approved Budget for the Contract : P7.5M for one (1) year
   Source of Fund : Operating Expenditure – Freight Charges
2. Computers and Printers for ten (10) new SSS Registration Centers
   The bid involves a **ONE-LOT BIDDING** for the following items:

Item Description	Qty.	Approved Budget for the Contract
PC Server	10 units	P 1,100,000.00
PC Workstation (Frontline)	38 units	P 2,850,000.00
PC Workstation (Backroom)	30 units	P 1,254,000.00
Laser Printer	10 units	P 198,000.00
132 column Dot Matrix Printer	20 units	P 726,000.00
80 column Dot Matrix Printer	48 units	P 475,200.00
Three-year Maintenance Services		P 1,980,960.00
TOTAL APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT		P 8,584,160.00

Eligible bidders may submit cost proposals in any of the following options:

- Purchase
- 5-year Lease – Rental
- 5-year Lease – Transfer

Contract Duration : Thirty (30) calendar days
Source of Fund : CAPEX – IT Resources for RC Task Force
: Furniture & Equipment Expense of Respective Branches
: Operating Expenditures – MR Computer Equipment

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Particulars	Date	Venue
Issuance of eligibility requirements	April 25, 2005 to May 10, 2005	BAC Secretariat, 6th Flr., SSS Main Bldg.
Deadline of submission of eligibility requirements	May 16, 2005 (Items#1&2)	BAC Secretariat, 6th Flr., SSS Main Bldg.
Issuance of Bidding Documents to Eligible Bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P5,000.00 for each project	May 18, 2005 (Items#1&2)	BAC Secretariat, 6th Flr., SSS Main Bldg.
Pre-bid Conference • Item#1 • Item#2	May 19, 2005 2:30p.m. May 19, 2005 3:00p.m.	President's Board Room, 6th Floor, SSS Main Bldg.
Submission & Opening of Bids shall be announced and confirmed through a Bid Bulletin.		

For any inquiry, please call telephone numbers 922-2991 or 920-6401 local 5490/5491.

This bidding shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act".

The SSS reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason, to waive any formality or technicality, and to award to any bidder whose proposal is deemed most advantageous to the SSS. The SSS neither assumes any obligation for any loss whatsoever that may be incurred by the bidders in the preparation of their respective bids, nor does the SSS guarantee that an award will be made.

THE CHAIRMAN
BIDS & AWARDS COMMITTEE

(PDI - April 23, 2004)

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2005 Call for Submission of Textbooks and Teacher's Manuals

The Department of Education is inviting interested publishers to submit copies of camera-ready materials for their series of textbooks and accompanying teacher's manuals for:

- **Makabayan** (Social Studies component) Grades 1 to 6 and First to Fourth Year high school intended for use in public schools nationwide starting SY 2006-2007; and
- **English** for Grades 1 to 6 and First to Fourth Year high school for use in SY 2007-2008.

All submitted materials will undergo a content evaluation process in four levels:

- Level 1 to test completeness of coverage, organization, and internal consistency;
- Level 2 to check accuracy of facts and information, integrity of concepts, and sequence of learning concepts;
- Level 3 to test the appropriateness of the language and visuals used; and
- Level 4 to ensure correct grammar and syntax.

The evaluation result will either be for Major Revision or Minor Revision. Content evaluation will NOT be on a Pass/Fail basis and therefore does not constitute prequalification.

Publishers will pay an evaluation fee of **twenty thousand pesos (P20,000)** either in cash or manager's check for each set of textbook and teacher's manual to be evaluated. The evaluation fee will be used to defray expenses for service fees, transportation, and board and lodging of evaluators. Publishers will be given a copy of the recommendations of the evaluators at the different levels which will serve as basis for revising the materials prior to submission for bidding. All materials – even those requiring major revisions – may be submitted when bids are tendered as scheduled. Equal opportunity shall be extended to other publishers who are capable of complying with DepEd's requirements.

The materials for Social Studies and English should be submitted to the DepEd-Instructional Materials Council Secretariat (IMCS), 5th Floor, Mabini Building, DepEd Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City not later than **June 16, 2005.**

In order to get a soft copy of the Learning Competencies and the 2005 Textbook Call Guidelines, bring a blank compact disk at the DepEd-IMCS starting April 18, 2005. For more information, please contact Ms. Daisy Asuncion O. Santos or Ms. Nonie M. Barraquias at 634-1054 or 631-9294.

For your information and guidance.

(Sgd.) JUAN MIGUEL M. LUZ
Undersecretary

(PDI–April 16 & 23, 2005)

NOTICE TO ALL PNSLAI MEMBERS

THE PHILIPPINE NAVY SAVINGS & LOAN ASSN., INC. WILL HOLD ITS ANNUAL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING AND ELECTION OF TRUSTEES ON APRIL 30, 2005 AT THE SOCIAL HALL, BNS, OFFICERS CLUBHOUSE BNS, FORT BONIFACIO, TAGUIG CITY. REGISTRATION WILL START AT 8:00 A.M.

ALL MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO ATTEND.

(Sgd.) COMMO DANIEL T DELGADO AFP (RET)
President

(PDI – April 23 & 24, 2005)

Mr. Campus idol 2005 registration

COVER Boy® Bar & Restaurant is the venue for this year's Mr. Campus Idol Contest. Over a hundred young men of contestants within Metro Manila will be pared down to just three (3) hopeful male models for the grand presentation on Tuesday, May 31, 2005 at the Second Floor, 3160 Alcar Building, Ramon Magsaysay Blvd. corner D. Ampil Street, Sta. Mesa, Manila. Registration is on going until May 15, 2005. Three winning titles and cash awards will be given for the winner on the talent, formal-wear, and sports-wear competition. No entrance fee on the awards night. For inquiries, call Cover Boy® Bar & Restaurant at 714-9480 or text 0927-585-6309 and look for JR, the operations manager.

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Bnew com/res 3br 2.8M 9487112

PARANAQUE

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P2.2M Single Det 15%DP 9-12mos 0%interst 832-1218

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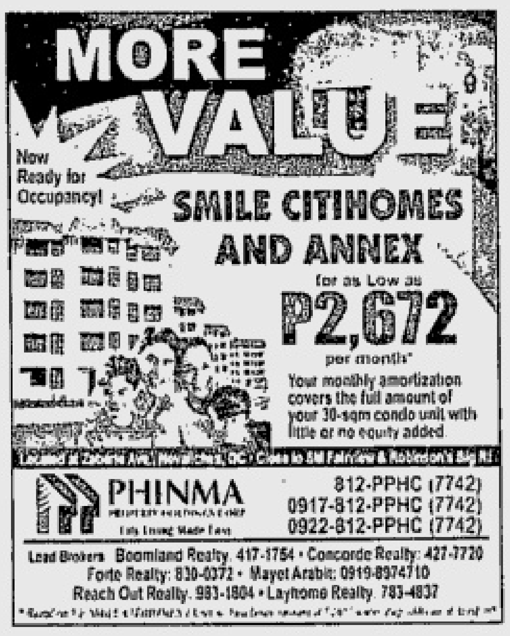

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BAY GARDEN ROXAS BLVD 1,2,3BR 0920-9602940 RFO

SN ANDRES MANILA Bnew Twnhse /3stry/3br/3-4tb/1-2grge mdsrmP3.860M up 8903461 loc 34

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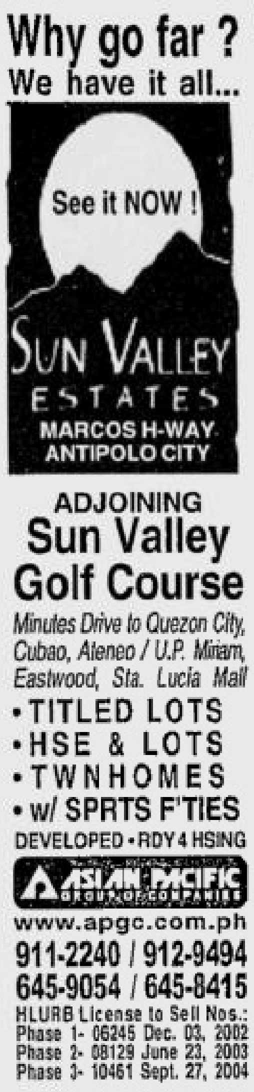

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LOT

KALOOCAN

Rainbow Village 5 LA 216m² P3,473/m² Vic 8903461 loc 25

PASIG

METROVILLE SUBD LA 333m² P4,054/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

QUEZON CITY

ACROPOLIS COR LOT 340m² AM SUN 8894796;6337601-03

RIZAL

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BULACAN

SAN MIGUEL BUL 4000m² P165/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

CAVITE

DON BOSCO EXEC HTS LA128m2 P2,900/m2 Vic 8903461 loc 27

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LOT

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STUDIO CITYLAND VITO CRUZ P7K 6382256 / 09167861716

MANDALUYONG

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PASIG

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the GSIS HOUSING LOAN application of the late RITCHIE M. DUQUE with account no. HMOD210017 housing address at Blk.36 lot 4, Magnolia Street, Modesta Village II San Mateo Rizal was extrajudicially settled by her heirs by means of Public Document executed on March 30, 2005 and ratified before Atty. Isidro V. Almenteros, Notary Public in the City of Manila on March 31, 2005, as per Doc. No. 369, Page No. 108, Book No. XXXX; Series of 2005 of his Notarial Register
PDI-April 16, 23 & 30, 2005

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), through its *Bids and Awards Committee (BAC)*, invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project	:	***Procurement of 600 Cartridges of Toner for Lexmark 1250/1255 Printer***
Location	:	***BIR National Office***
Brief Description	:	***High Yield; 17,600 copies per toner P/N 13829.25***
Approved Budget	:	***P7,854,000.00***
Delivery Period	:	***Batch I - 300 Cartridges - within thirty (30) calendar days upon receipt of approved Purchase Order (P.O.)*** ***Batch II - 300 Cartridges - within ninety (90) calendar days upon receipt of approved Purchase Order (P.O.)***

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last three (3) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	April 19 to May 15, 2005
2. Pre-bid Conference	May 2, 2005
3. Opening of Bids	May 16, 2005
4. Bid Evaluation	May 17 to June 1, 2005
5. Post-qualification	June 2-9, 2005
6. Notice of Award	June 30, 2005

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of *Seven Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty Four Pesos Only (P7,854.00)* to the BIR Cashier.

The BIR assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid. The BIR also reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any of the required formality therein and accept the bids most advantageous to the government.

For particulars, please inquire from the BAC Secretariat, thru the Chief, Procurement Division at Room 605, 6th Floor, BIR-NOB, Diliman, Quezon City or call telephone nos. 926-5547, 926-5538 and 928-2026 (fax), or e-mail us at nelly.ibe@bir.gov.ph until May 15, 2004.

Approved by:

(Sgd.) ATTY. JOSE MARIO C. BUÑAG
Deputy Commissioner
Legal and Inspection Group
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - April 16 & 23, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
Office of the President
Metro Manila Development Authority
PASIG RIVER REHABILITATION COMMISSION

INVITATION FOR BIDS

Project : Pasig River Environmental Management and Rehabilitation Sector Development Program (PAREMAR)
Loan No. : Asian Development Bank (ADB) Loan No. 1746-PHI
Description of Works : Construction and Development of two(2) Linear Parks at the DBM and Malacañang compounds along Pasig River

1. The Government of the Philippines (GOP) has received a loan from the ADB toward the cost of PAREMAR and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this loan, together with the GOP counterpart funds, to payments under the Contracts for DBM Procurement Service Linear Park Project and Malacañang Linear Park Project.
2. The Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) as the executing agency now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for the following contract packages:

Contract Package	Construction and Development of the DBM South Linear Park	Construction and Development of the PSG Malacañang – Mabini Shrine Linear Park
Contract No.	EPA-LPP-24	EPA-LPP-26
Area	2,355.00 sq m.	7,830.00 sq m.
Location	Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Procurement Service Compound, San Miguel, Manila	Malacañang PSG Compound, San Miguel, Manila
Contract Duration	120 calendar days	180 calendar days
Project Description	Construction and development of linear park/ promenade which includes the following items of work: civil, electrical, plumbing, hardscape and softscape elements, among others.	Construction and development of linear park/ promenade which includes the following items of work: civil, electrical, plumbing, hardscape and softscape elements, among others

3. Interested Bidders shall secure the Bid Documents and submit bids as follows:

Activity		Date	Time	Venue	Remarks
Securing of (a) Eligibility Checklist or (b) submission of Letter of Intent and purchase of complete set of Bid Documents upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Php 11,500.00		From 25 April – 02 May 2005	From 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.	PRRC 2F, MWSS Engineering Bldg. Katipunan Road, Old Balara, Quezon City	Eligibility checklist is free of charge
Securing of additional eligibility information (if any) and inspection of Bidding Documents		From 25 April – 02 May 2005	From 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.		For those who secured only the Eligibility Checklist
Pre-Bid Conference	DBM South Linear Park Malacañang Linear Park	23 May 2005	09:00 A.M.	PRRC (same address)	
Site Inspection	DBM South Linear Park	23 May 2005	02:00 P.M.	DBM Procurement Service Compound, San Miguel, Manila	Right after Pre-bid conference
	Malacañang Linear Park			Malacañang PSG Compound, San Miguel, Manila	Right after Pre-bid conference
Deadline for submission of Bids	DBM South Linear Park Malacañang Linear Park	06 June 2005	10:00 A.M.	PRRC (same address)	Late bids (bids submitted after 10 A.M.) shall not be accepted
Opening of Bids	DBM South Linear Park Malacañang Linear Park	06 June 2005	10:15 A.M.	PRRC (same address)	Bids shall be opened in the presence of the bidders

4. The City of Manila and Department of Budget and Management (DBM) shall be the implementing agencies of the *DBM South Linear Park Project* and the City of Manila and Malacañang PSG shall be the implementing agencies of the *PSG Malacañang – Mabini Shrine Linear Park Project.*
5. Bidding (Eligibility Check/Prequalification, Bid Evaluation, and Award of Contract) shall be conducted on the basis of local competitive bidding among interested Bidders from ADB eligible source countries as defined under the *"Guidelines for Procurement by the Asian Development Bank and its Borrowers"* pursuant to the Implementing Rules and Regulations of R.A. No. 9184 and ADB Guidelines for the Procurement of Civil Works as standardized under the harmonized ADB-GOP Procurement of Works guidelines.
6. PRRC-IABAC reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at anytime prior to Contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) BINGLE H.B. GUTIERREZ
Executive Director

Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission
2F, MWSS Engineering Bldg., Katipunan Road, Old Balara, Quezon City 1105
Tel. Nos. 433-3444 and 433-344
Email Address: prrc@tri-isys.com
Fax No. 926-52-34

(April 16 & 23, 2005)

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

The public is hereby notified that on Dec. 1, 2004, the National Capital Judicial Region, Metropolitan Trial Court, Branch 64, Makati City, has issued a **Warrant of Arrest** in connection with **Criminal Case No. 331228** entitled "People of the Philippines versus **Donnabelle Alva, Accused**" for the arrest of the said accused **Donnabelle Alva**, wife of **Arnold A. Alva of Aerospan Travel and Tours, Inc.**, located at **No. 171, Alley 1, Project 6, Quezon City.**

Any information on her whereabouts leading to her arrest can be forwarded to Tel. No. 8331207 or cellphone No. 09172098956.

(PDI--April 23, 24, 30 & May 1, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE
PROVINCIAL GENERAL SERVICES OFFICE
Provincial Capitol Building, Dipolog City
Tel. #(065) 212-3561 Telefax #(065) 212-6492

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Supply and delivery of Pharmacy Items, Medical, Dental and Laboratory Supplies, Construction & Electrical Supplies, Tires, Oil and Lubricants.

The Province of Zamboanga del Norte through the General Fund of 2005 intends to apply the following amount being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC):

		ABC
A. PHARMACY ITEMS		
1. PR # 101(01)05-4-0706	Php	636,265.00
2. PR# 101(01)05-4-0702	Php	3,208,103.40
3. PR# 101(01)05-4-0700	Php	1,021,000.00
4. PR# 101(01)05-4-0711	Php	861,896.00
5. PR# 101(01)05-4-0704	Php	651,221.00
6. PR# 101(01)05-4-0697	Php	755,279.50
B. MEDICAL, DENTAL AND LABORATORY SUPPLIES		
1. PR# 101(01)05-4-0701	Php	345,374.40
2. PR# 101(09)05-4-0195	Php	405,292.60
3. PR# 101(01)05-4-0710	Php	380,880.30
4. PR# 101(01)05-4-0709	Php	662,947.90
5. PR# 101(01)05-4-0707	Php	332,719.64
6. PR#101(01)05-4-0705	Php	750,986.60

		ABC
C. CONSTRUCTION AND ELECTRICAL SUPPLIES		
1. PR # 101(01)05-4-0646	Php	2,462,401.00
2. PR# 101 (01)05-4-0647	Php	1,837,599.00
3. PR# 101(01)05-2-0266	Php	949,804.60
4. PR# 101(01)05-2-0264	Php	343,878.60
5. PR# 101(01)05-2-0224	Php	322,800.00
D. TIRES		
1. PR# 101(01)05-4-0682	Php	5,662,750.00
2. PR# 101(01)05-2-0346	Php	360,000.00
E. OIL AND LUBRICANTS		
1. PR# 101(01)05-4-0681	Php	1,455,000.00

Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

The Province of Zamboanga del Norte now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders to apply for Eligibility and to Bid. Delivery of the Goods is required for thirty (30) calendar days upon receipt of the Purchase Order. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act No. 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act and is restricted to organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, as specified in Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183). Only bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the lowest calculated bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine his responsiveness to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

Schedule of Activities	Date	Time
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	May 02 to 06, 2005	
2. Pre Bid Conference	May 09, 2005	10:00 A.M.
3. Opening of Bids & Eligibility Requirements	May 23, 2005	10:00 A.M.

All activities shall be held at the Provincial General Services Office, Capitol Bldg., Dipolog City, unless announced otherwise.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the Secretariat Bids and Awards Committee and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below. Bidding Documents shall be issued upon payment of a non-refundable amount of One Thousand (Php 1,000.00) pesos.

The Province of Zamboanga del Norte reserves the right to accept or reject any bid and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liabilities to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) EMMANUEL S. LADERA
BAC, Chairman
PGSO, Capitol Bldg., Dipolog City 7100
Tel. # (065) 212-9093, 212-3561
Telefax # (065) 212-6492

(PDI – April 16 & 23, 2005)

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In the words of Stephen Covey, "Private victories precede public victories." This program is a MUST for those who want to rise above the average.

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DENR 101st PCGA, and MYC sign MOU

FOR many of us Filipinos, the Manila Bay completes our childhood, and mention of the Bay brings back memories we will always cherish. It was not simply a bay for us – it was our park, our playground, our source of livelihood.

Unfortunately, over the years, the Bay that we have loved and enjoyed is now a picture of contradictions. The pristine waters are now murky, the wide beaches are now reclaimed, and the pleasant smell a pungent odor.

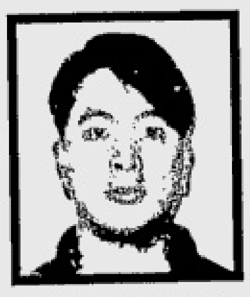
Challenged by the present condition of the Bay, the DENR, 101st Squadron of Philippine Coast Guard Auxiliary (101st PCGA) and Manila Yacht Club (MYC) signed a Memorandum of Undertaking (MOU) last Feb. 5, at the Manila Yacht Club, Roxas Blvd., Manila.

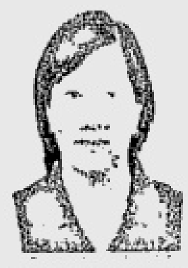
Signing in behalf of DENR is Armando A. de Castro, Usec. for Management and Technical Services, who is represented by lawyer Analiza Rebuelta-Teh, Asec. for Foreign-Assisted and Special Projects; for 101st PCGA is Cdr. Romeo J. Herman, Squadron Commander; and for MYC is RADM Ildefonso G. Tronqued, Jr., Commodore of MYC.

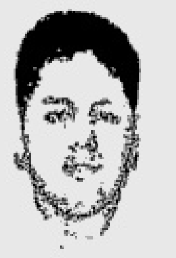
The MOU was signed in the presence of Julian D. Amador, Manila Bay Environmental Management Project (MBEMP) Director, and Cdr. Valentin Prieto, Jr., Project Commander of the Marine Environmental Protection Project (MAREP). Also present in the MOU signing are officers and members of 101st PCGA, DENR-MBEMP Project Manager and staff, and students and faculty members of Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila (PLM).

After the MOU signing, PLM students and faculty members, with the assistance of 101st PCGA, conducted a clean-up of the Bay along Roxas Boulevard. This clean-up aims to promote awareness among the youth regarding the situation of the Bay and how their sector could help in attaining the common vision of regaining the lost glory of Manila Bay.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC


ALEX O. DIMALANTA II


CORNELIA ROWENA C. ANGELES


CONSTANTINE M. NAVARRO

Notice is hereby given to the public that the persons appearing above have outstanding warrants of arrest issued by the Regional Trial Court of Pasig City, Branch 266, in connection with the prosecution of Criminal Case. No. 126735 to 37 entitled ***"People of the Philippines vs. Alex O. Dimalanta II, Cornelia Rowena C. Angeles and Constantine M. Navarro"*** Any information regarding the whereabouts leading to the arrest of the above-named persons will be rewarded.

Any information relating to the foregoing may be communicated to:

ATTYS. CHRISTIAN ROBERT S. LIM AND
ROSS JOSEPH J. ROMANILLOS
LIM and OCAMPO LAW OFFICES
4th Floor, ACT Tower
135 Sen. Gil J. Puyat Avenue, Salcedo Village, Makati City
Tel. Nos.: 840-2787, 840-2814 & 8402825

(PDI – April 23, 24, 30 & May 1, 2005)

Business community eyes entrepreneurial revolution in RP

THE BUSINESS community, led by the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (Ecop), will sit down with concerned sectors and stakeholders to constructively discuss issues that hamper the country's bid in igniting an "entrepreneurial revolution." According to Ecop president Rene Y. Soriano, the items to be tackled, among others, are the low savings rate in the country, transforming overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) savings into job-creating productive capital, and reducing the cost of doing business. He said these issues will be thoroughly taken up in the 26th National Conference of Employers scheduled on May 17 to 18, at the Manila Hotel.

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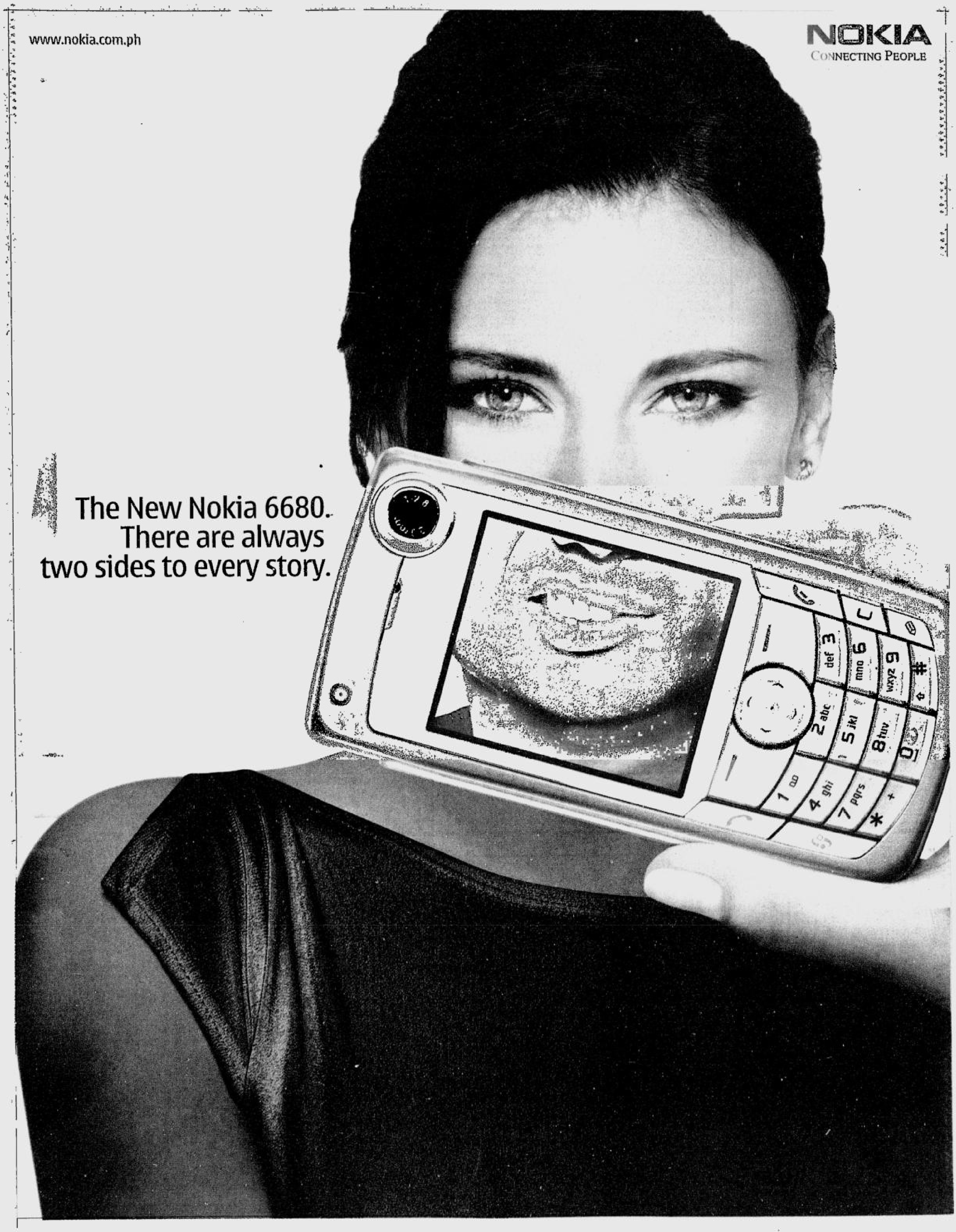
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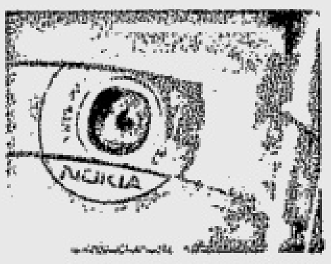
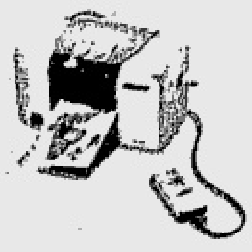
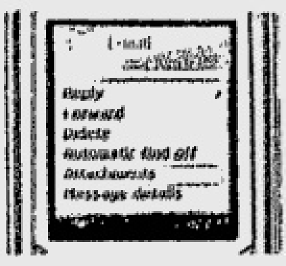

Built-in Flash


Express Printing
via USB, Bluetooth or
Memory Card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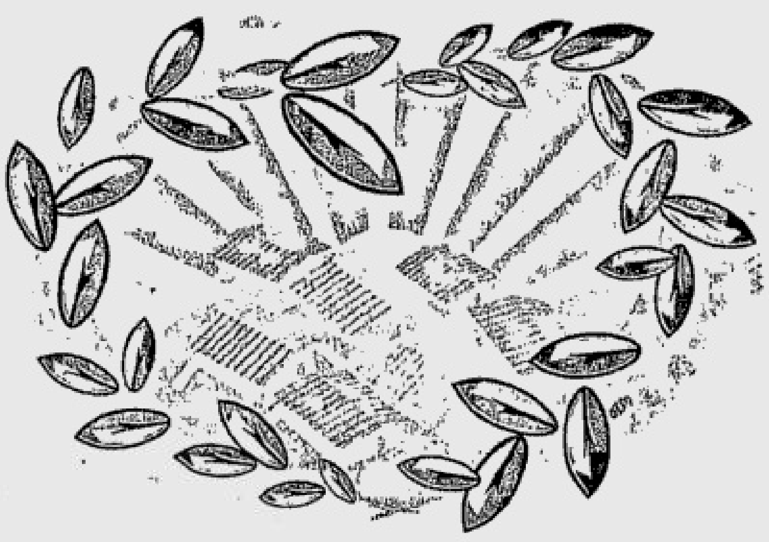
PROPERTY

Editor Cesar D. Mangawang

Developing a community in balance with nature



By Charles E. Buban

AFFORDABLE "green" housing has long been a dream that home developers have struggled to achieve.

Until recently, an ecologically oriented community has mostly been limited to high-cost developments that could only cater to those in the upper income bracket.

But exceptions do exist.

"A number of eco-conscious developers are tackling these challenges with strategies designed to minimize materials consumption, maximize efficiency, and nature conservation," says Alzon Gotiangco, sales operations manager of Moldex Realty Marketing Inc., the company behind the development of Metrogate Silang Estates.

Premier example

Metrogate Silang, located on Aguinaldo Highway in Silang, Cavite, is a 250-hectare residential subdivision that is being groomed as the country's premier example of an ecopolis.

Gotiangco explains that the word ecopolis is rooted in the real need of people to have a set-

DEVELOPING/ B2

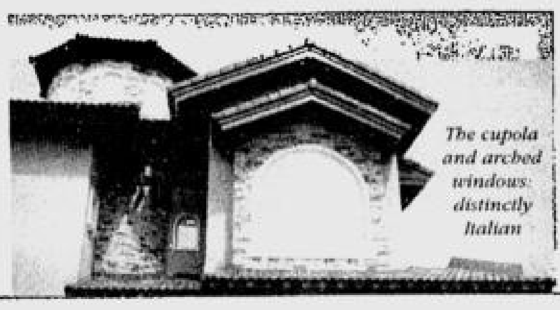
Raphael at Courtyards of Portofino

ROMANCING THE HOME...INSIDE AND OUT

Brittany Corporation, the maverick in property development, unveils its latest courtyard model home, Raphael, at Courtyards of Portofino in Alabang.

Raphael brings to life the romance of classic Italian courtyard homes. At the heart of this romantic home is the courtyard. A private area at the side of Raphael, the courtyard is wrapped between the living room and dining room. It is a romantic area that goes from inside the home to the outside.

Opening the doors of the living room and the dining room leading to the courtyard extends your area for entertaining family and friends. Distinctively Italian architectural details enhance the Old World romantic feel of Raphael: bright, sun-drenched colors, large arched windows and a *balcon arrandi*, or rounded balcony.



The cupola and arched windows: distinctly Italian

Moreover, Raphael is surrounded by grand courtyards across the entire property. This courtyard-within-a-courtyard concept is a design that is uniquely Brittany's.

Raphael has a floor area of 249 sq.m. and a minimum lot area of 300 sq.m. It has 4 bedrooms and a family area on the 3rd floor. Each bedroom has its own toilet and bath.

With its side courtyard, Raphael provides the perfect place for intimate interludes with a loved one or for gatherings with close friends, where you enjoy the cooling breeze and the scenic skies...right inside your home.

Get to know true romance in a courtyard. Come over to Courtyards of Portofino this Sunday, April 24 from 9 a.m. onwards. *Abbia un giorno di divertimento con la famiglia!*

COURTYARDS
OF
Portofino

Un Segreto è All'interno

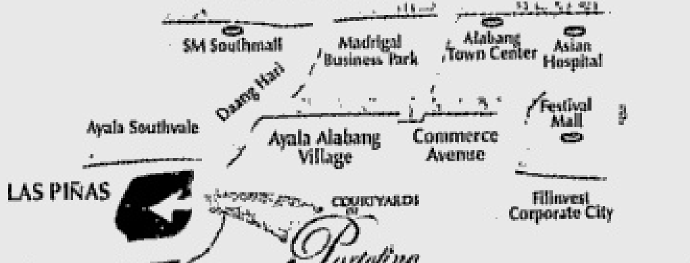
(INSIDE, A SECRET LIES IN WAIT.)

An intriguing secret is tucked inside the homes at Courtyards of Portofino...an enchanting room, where sunny skies and starry nights serve as nature's canopy; a private place for friends and family. This is your very own courtyard, and it's right inside your home.

Inspired by classic Italian design, Courtyards of Portofino brings home charming Old World archways, cupolas, vivid sun-drenched colors and best of all, quaint, uniquely Italian courtyards. Moreover, the courtyard homes surround grand courtyards across the enclave of Courtyards of Portofino.

Discover the secret, experience the enchantment of Courtyards of Portofino.

850 2868 • 850 6986 • www.brittany.com.ph



Brittany
CORPORATION

Are your children's playgrounds toxic?

GREEN ARCHITRENDS

Amado de Jesus

THIS summer, parents will be sending their little children to spend mornings or afternoons in the parks and playgrounds. These tiny tots will be playing in wooden forts and castles, gazebos, decks, landscaping timbers, benches and picnic tables.

As they play, they could be in direct contact with a silent, mysterious enemy that most parents know little about. This enemy is known as the preservative CCA.

What CCA is

CCA, which stands for chromated copper arsenate, is an extraordinary preservative that has been injected in pressure-treated boards, ordinary planks and posts to extend the life of wood five times. This prevents lumber from rotting when exposed to sun, rain, termites and fungus. CCA is infused deep into wood fibers under high pressure. The bad news is CCA is a form of arsenic which we know is poisonous.

Wooden posts treated with CCA in decks and docks, utility and construction poles may not be so harmful. But those CCA-treated wood posts, planks, fences and tables that little children with hand-to-mouth characteristics touch, are considered a serious health concern.

In the United States, dozens of playgrounds in Florida have been shut down as the government ordered a state-run wood treatment plant to switch to another preservative. Nine other nations including Sweden, Germany, Japan, Vietnam and Indonesia have banned or restricted the use of CCA. Why?

Arsenic is a known carcinogen and is more toxic than previously thought. With the widespread use of CCA-treated wood, public health concern abroad has escalated with the discovery that arsenic is strongly linked to skin, lung, bladder and kidney cancer.

Exposure to arsenic

Recent studies have confirmed that high levels of arsenic can be released to children's hands by direct contact with arsenic-treated wood or more indirectly through arsenic-contaminated soil, groundwater, or surface water. We know that little children are prone to put their hand in their mouth. They are at great risk because their livers metabolize the poison more slowly, and their brains and bodies are still developing.

Ingestion of arsenic is the major concern for children's play sets and picnic tables since children pick up arsenic residues on their hands from the surface of the wood and then are exposed when they put their hands in their mouths. They can also be exposed to arsenic through splinters or by ingesting contaminated soil.

Arsenic is tasteless, colorless and odorless. It causes a wide range of adverse health effects at high, moderate and low doses. The major human pathway of arsenic exposure is through ingestion or swallowing.

Sanding or cutting CCA-treated wood creates arsenic-laden wood dust that can be easily inhaled or can wash off the surface to contaminate the ground below. Some studies say that arsenic is a more powerful carcinogen when inhaled than when ingested. The soil around CCA wood structures is very often contaminated with arsenic.

Checking presence of arsenic

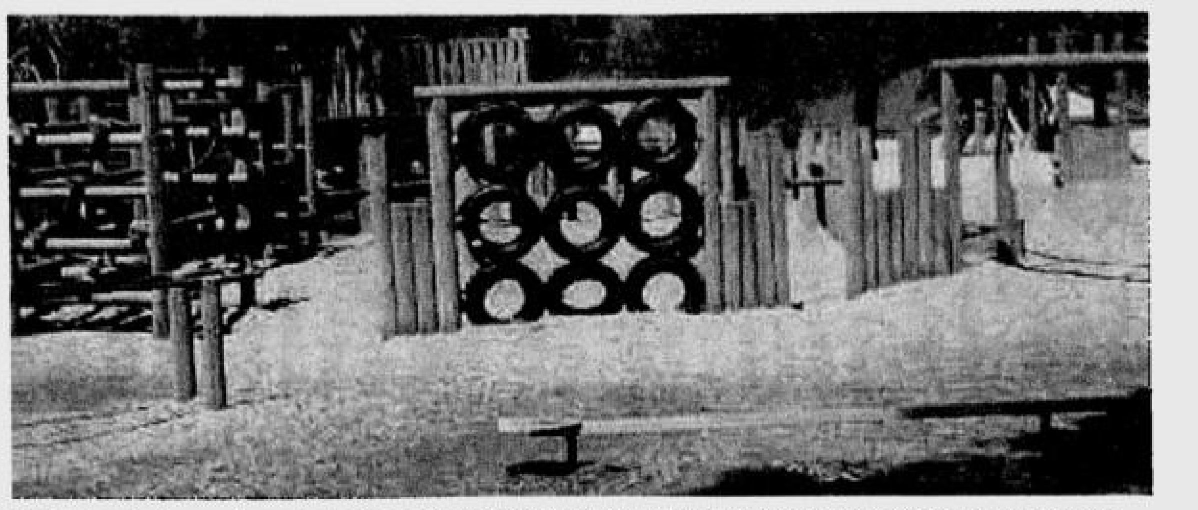
A wipe test on the wood using a piece of cloth for laboratory analysis can determine the presence of arsenic. The wipe technique is intended to simulate typical hand contact with CCA lumber surfaces and will show how much arsenic is being released by that particular lumber surface. Another way is to check the soil around the CCA wood structures.

What can be done with existing CCA structures?

The safest action to take for arsenic exposure is to replace the structure with nonarsenic-based structures. Treating CCA lumber with semi-transparent oil-based deck stain will lock in most of the arsenic for about 18 months, and it is advisable to use two coats the first time you stain the structure, and to repaint it every year.

Other types of commonly available outdoor wood waterproofing agents and sealants only reduce arsenic release from CCA lumber for about one to six months. Outdoor paints tend to flake and peel, requiring considerable surface preparation before recoating. Sanding is definitely not recommended.

If in some cases, it may not be feasible to dismantle the CCA structure and completely replace it with arsenic-free wood or alternatives, then the wood should be sealed at least once a year.



HIGH levels of arsenic can be released to children's hands by direct contact with arsenic-treated wood such as those found in some playgrounds and parks. We know that little children are prone to put their hand in their mouth. They are at great risk because their livers metabolize the poison more slowly, and their brains and bodies are still developing.

BD DEVELOPERS/GREEN

Green building materials

One of the major elements of green architecture is the use of green building materials. (The other elements are building ecology or indoor air quality, energy efficiency, green building systems and good design.)

Whether designing playgrounds or office buildings, green architecture advocates the use of green materials. Green materials are those that use the earth's resources in an environmentally responsible way. Green materials are therefore nontoxic. They are "green" in their manufacturing process, the manner they are utilized and the way they are reclaimed after use.

It's about time architects and builders collectively support the use of green building materials and raise the benchmark and make it easier to build green and healthy buildings ... and playgrounds.

(The author is vice chair of the board of judges of the Asean Energy Awards and is a practising green architect. For comments or inquiries, e-mail amadodejesus@gmail.com.)

Accessibility attracts offices to Bonifacio Global City

CORPORATIONS that put a high premium on accessibility and quality of development are driving up the demand for office space at Bonifacio Global City.

In fact, private developers are finalizing blueprints for new office buildings in Bonifacio Global City's E-Square district. Construction of an office building at the Bonifacio Triangle area is also expected to begin this year.

In contrast to many other business districts within Metro Manila, entrance and exit are easy to and from Bonifacio Global City given its various access points, note executives of firms that have set up their headquarters in the area.

In addition, Bonifacio Global City is close to Makati, the Ortigas Center and the South Luzon Expressway, observes Joselito Yanga of First Balfour Inc. which has set up shop at Bonifacio Technology Center. First Balfour is one of the largest engineering and construction firms in the Philippines. It is a fully owned subsidiary of First Philippine Holdings.

Reasons for choosing

Bonifacio Global City's greenery and well-maintained parks, where employees can jog or stroll, likewise offer a stark contrast to the concrete jungle found in most urban areas, Yanga adds.

For its part, NEC Telecom Software Philippines Inc. chose Bonifacio Global City from among five potential sites. It operates within Bonifacio Global City's E-Square, a 25-hectare zone accredited by the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (Peza).

NEC is a software development company engaged in research, design development, export and open management of software for communication equipment, transmission systems and systems engineering.

At the top of NEC's list of reasons for choosing Bonifacio Global City was its proximity to the Makati Central Business District and the airport, says NEC's Zoilo Gonzales. Other major considerations for the company were the city's multiple access points, safety for the visitors and expatriates from NEC's mother company in Japan, expected future business and commercial developments, available and safe parking, good telecom and power facilities, low traffic density within the area, and less polluted than other congested business districts.

Digital Media Exchange Inc. chose to put up its office in Bonifacio Global City because it has wide streets, provisions for good circulation even when it gets built up, presence of quality housing, better air quality and greenery. "And all this is available without being too far from other business partners whose offices are in the Makati area," says Scott Countryman of Digital Media Exchange which operates within the Net One building.

Locators

Digital Media is the first company in the Philippines to integrate leading digital content, technology, operational expertise and youth marketing savvy that provides a socially-interactive entertainment experience.

Another technology firm, Cypress Semiconductor, located at Bonifacio Global City because of the available high-tech communication facilities, a must for the US-based company.

Bonifacio Global City's E-Square district is particularly attractive for Peza-accredited firms that may avail of various incentives including income tax holiday for three to six years (after which, a lower tax rate applies); exemption from local taxes, fees and duties on imported equipment and materials; and employment of foreign nationals.

A company may be Peza-accredited if its activities are export-related. The exemption applies to service exporters such as IT and computer-related services and call centers, as well as manufacturers of nontraditional export products/services with capability to export at least 50 percent (if Filipino-owned) or 70 percent (if foreign-owned) of its output.

ACCESSIBILITY and high development standards have attracted locators to the Bonifacio Technology Center at the Bonifacio Global City which is experiencing high demand for office space.

Creba Expo 2005: 'Our world under one roof'

THE CREBA Expo 2005: "Our world under one roof" at the World Trade Center on July 27-30 aims to get together real estate developers, local and foreign investors, financing institutions and banks and the public—buyers and the end-users—especially families striving to become, in a real sense, homeowners.

It will be the first creative exposition or presentation of the widest range of the country's property products by the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders Associations (Creba).

"The target investors and markets, physical arrangements, programs and activities, with the expo's aims and objectives, will certainly put the four-day event apart from similar exhibits in size and magnitude," said Rosemarie C. Basa, Creba executive vice president and overall chairperson of the expo executive committee.

Exhibitors

The exhibitors are developers of upscale, medium, low-cost and socialized housing projects as well as developers of medium to high-rise condominiums, retirement villages, theme parks, farm lots, spas, wellness centers and memorial parks.

Others are golf courses and clubs, country and embassy pavilions; suppliers and contractors in housing technology, construction products; banks, insurance companies and government financing agencies such as the Pag-Ibig Fund, Social Security System and Government Service Insurance System.

Objectives

The expo objectives, Basa said, are to:

- Create a business climate through business matching and other activities, so that at the end of the exhibit proper, the exhibitors would have concluded business transactions with each other or their partners.
- Provide business companies engaged in all forms of real estate development with an exhibit venue to showcase their products in an atmosphere of creativity and distinct style.
- Bring investors and exhibitors from the international market to tie up with local counterparts and suppliers.

The expo's special concern, according to Basa, is to offer the public and interested buyers from the middle to the high-end sectors greater opportunities in real estate purchases and transactions. But of great special concern, she said, is the middle-income families looking for a chance of owning apartments or single-detached houses-and-lot packages for "home-sweet-homes" through 15- to 20-year monthly amortizations at rates even lower than what they now pay as mere rent, in order to become actual, not only virtual, homeowners.

People behind expo

Members of the expo executive committee are Purita R. Soliven, Avelina P. Acuña, Teresita C. Millan, Efren "Choy" Alas, Pedro C. Tario and Jimmy Cura, Creba national president, adviser.

The Creba Expo 2005's "movers and shakers" are Reghis Romero II, ways and means; Ed Sese, structural; Dinky Einsiedel, space planning; Henry Olonan, president, United Architects of the Philippines ((UAP); Andy Villarin, president, Philippine Institute of Architects (PIA); Maryanne Espina, president, Philippine Association of Landscape Architects (Pala); Francis Dangalan, president, Philippine Institute of Environmental Planners (Piep); Choy Alas and Bobby Alvarez, business matching; Roger Garcia, media; Raffy Galvez and Toto Laraya, interior designers; Melanie Z. Siena Lapore, creative artist; Andrew Que and Jing Expiritu, special events; Popoy Magno, forum; Bong Casten and Linky Nepomuceno, event operations.

Birmingham Meadows: A lot better than living in metro

SOUTHHAMPTON model: two-story house

WHERE in the suburbs of Metro Manila, considering conveniences, facilities and environment, may one live like, even a lot better than, in the metropolis?

Out there on A. Mabini Highway in Burgos, Rodriguez (formerly Montalban), Rizal, a new residential subdivision called Birmingham Meadows is fast rising. The locale does sound far and unfamiliar but the serene environment and the available facilities and conveniences nearby will make one's home worth living in.

For the project with its urban yet rustic ambience is one of a few where, even in summer, family members will breathe fresh clean air, wake up to the chirping of birds in early mornings and from the balcony, see stars in the sky on clear nights.

Two-story house and lot units, townhouses and home lots are being offered by owner-developer Homeowners Development Corp. for middle-income families.

The company has a track record of building 26 earlier communities—in Cainta, Angono and San Mateo, Rizal; Pasig City, Antipolo City, Caloocan City and Quezon City—with comfortable, affordable and well-designed and structurally sound houses, using steel-reinforced concrete and complete with subdivision amenities.

According to HDC president Jaime L. Hernandez, five models are available. These are the following:

- Gloucester model has 110- square-meter floor area on 120-sq-m lot, living and dining rooms, two toilet-bath rooms, three bedrooms, maid's room, balcony and carport lanai.
- Northampton model has 74-sq-m floor, 120-sq-m lot area, three bedrooms, two toilet-bathrooms and carport.
- Southhampton model has two bedrooms and two toilet-bathrooms.
- Coventry and Dover townhouse units have 50-sq-m floor, 55- to 63-sq-m lot, two bedrooms and bathrooms.

The developer's office may be reached at 911-2696 or www.hdc-realestate.com.

Developing a community in balance with nature

From page B2-1

tlement in balance with nature.

"An ecopolis employs appropriate technology. For example, using more steel in framing is economical because apart from being recyclable, it conserves trees. Another is ensuring good site management once every element of the community is constructed to reduce waste and pollution," says Gotiangco.

Mini paradise

Since Metrogate Silang is located in the cooler part of the province (thanks to its proximity to the Tagaytay Ridge) and the fact that it has fertile soil, its developer found it perfect in transforming the place into a mini paradise.

The centerpiece of this transformation is the 10-hectare ecopolis town center, a mixed use area for recreation, education and commerce.

Already in place are the multi-level clubhouse complex, 40-bay driving range (with 3-hole golf course), amphitheater, go-cart race track, two outdoor tennis courts and covered basketball courts.

The clubhouse, in particular, is now complete with reception and lounge areas, game and video room, gym and fitness center, function rooms, restaurant, karaoke room, bar, coffee shop, and shower and locker rooms.

Jungle pool

Nearing completion is a jungle pool worth P10 million that will occupy 5,220-sq-m area of the ecopolis town center.

"This recreational facility will feature various water fun features and will serve as the park's centerpiece," reveals Gotiangco.

A portion of the town center is being planned to be leased or sold for commercial and educational purposes such as nursery and primary schools, fish and farm restaurants, vegetable garden, a market, department stores and other retail outlets.

"Our target here is to fill up the town center with establishments that would make Metrogate Silang a self-contained community. Our residents may need to go out less often," reveals Gotiangco.

Affordable package

With all amenities and high-end features incorporated within Metrogate Silang, Moldex Realty Marketing's Karen Agbunag is proud to announce that they were able to offer their lots as well as house and lots at an affordable package.

"There is strong demand considering that the house and lot package we are offering them can be acquired for as low as P1.7 million," says Agbunag.

She adds that they had to open two new additional phases (6A and 2A) just to accommodate home buyers wanting to become part of Metrogate Silang.

She adds, "I believe Metrogate Silang is a very wise investment. Our buyers knew that they will not just be getting their homes at a very reasonable price, they will also be enjoying a community that respects its environment and exists in harmony with its natural surroundings."

ISLAND Park's master-planned community provides a balance between development and environment.

FAMILY feasts are taken to the Caribbean with warm tones and island-inspired interiors.

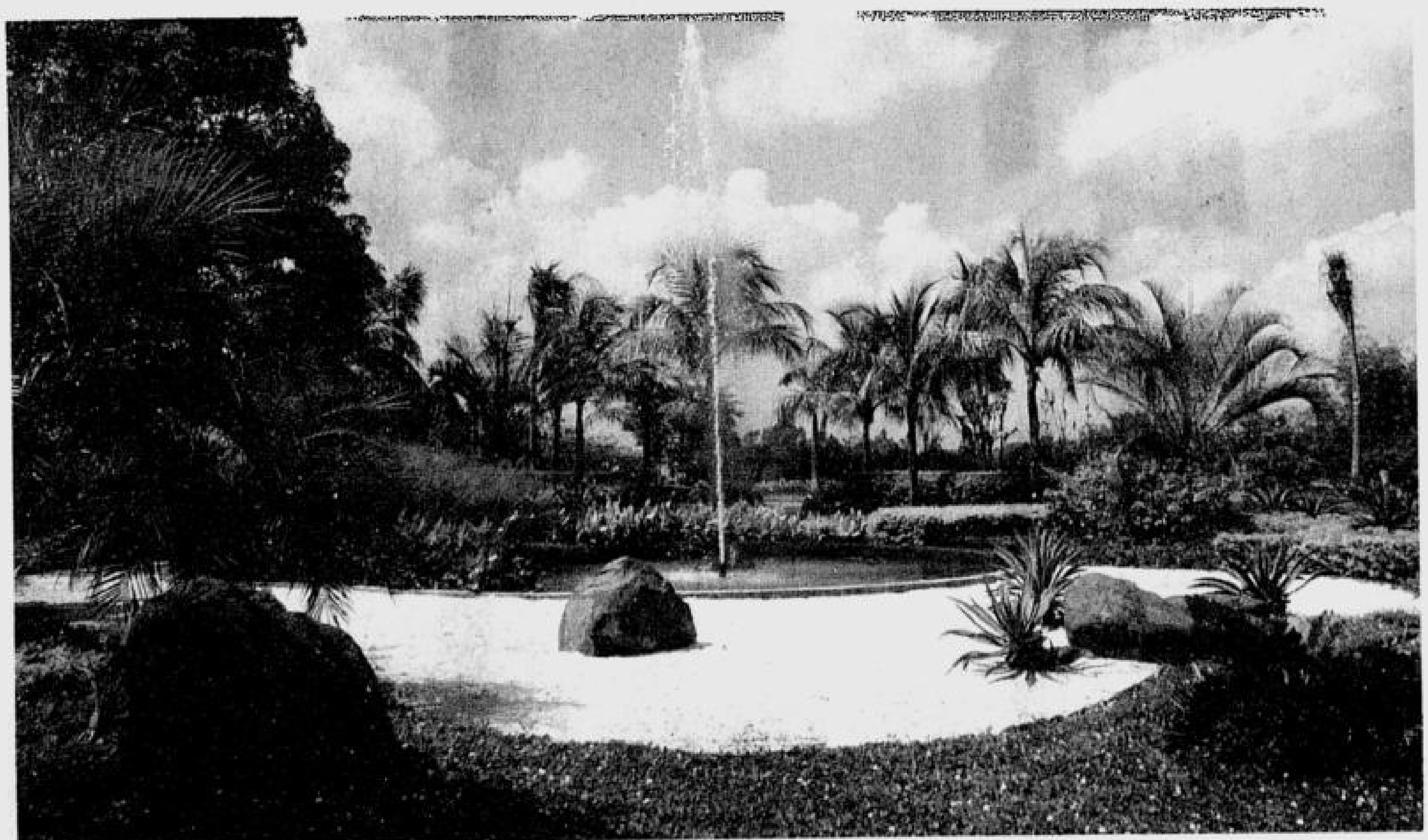
A LOUNGE area found in the master's bedroom of the Alpinia model draws the feel of relaxing in an island paradise.

THE ALPINIA model welcomes its residents with a cheerful ambiance reminiscent of beachfront villas.

Master-planning a tropical-themed paradise in metro south

IN AN EXCLUSIVE, high-end residential community where families expect to live comfortably in a splendid ambiance fulfilling their cultivated tastes, master-planning is a key challenge.

It is the kind that brings to life thematic influences imparting a unique character and feel, while maximizing the use of space to achieve uncluttered expansiveness.


THE RARE 45:55 space to development area ratio of Island Park results in literally a sunlit, breezy paradise.

Property jewel

Brittany Corp., the maverick known for up-market residential communities with themes inspired by the world's most beautiful places, has risen to the challenge in designing Island Park. Evocative of tropical resort islands around the globe, recently launched Island Park is a property jewel taking advantage of the escape, proximity and space that the metro south alone offers urbanites.

- Escape, because the community offers an unspoiled environment removed from crowded metro scenes
- Proximity, made possible by major access roads like multilane Daanghari which allows unequalled access and easy travel to business and leisure destinations
- Space, offered by open land areas with fresh air, and transformed by thoughtful master-planning.

45:55 ratio

Executing the thematic inspiration of tropical resort islands, Brittany achieves a rare 45:55 ratio of space to development areas at Island Park, and the result is literally a sunlit, breezy paradise.

Highlights of master-planning for the 100-hectare luxury community include the following:

- Ultimate in balance between development and environment;
- Expert inputs from Colorado-based land planning/design firm David Jensen & Associates, and landscape and urban design consultants SWA Group in California;
- An inherently strategic location, right on Governor's Drive and soon with another entrance to open on Molino Boulevard in Dasmariñas, Cavite, for quick travel to Alabang through Daanghari.

Each island village is designed for a specific residential market.

Sports, leisure complex

In the heart of Island Park community is Paseo Park, a 2.7–hectare sports and leisure complex with a difference, since its athletic courts are laid out amid trees, flowers and fountains, among play parks, picnic areas, jogging paths, gazebos and a pavilion.

Complementing Paseo Park will be Club Island, an elegant 3-hectare country club. In front of Club Island will shimmer a lovely lake, and across it lakeside homes next to activity areas, with choices of town homes and resort condos for residents who enjoy active lifestyles.

Thematic influences

Next to Paseo Park is Montego Villas on 26 hectares, its thematic influences inspired by the Caribbean's fabled Montego Bay, the latest of its model homes being Alpinia, with a cheerful ambiance reminiscent of beachfront villas.

The island village of Ibiza boasts home design elements that are airy, fresh and sunny, evident in the colors, window designs and high ceilings, with custom home sites ranging from 300 to 700 sq m. Adjacent to Ibiza is the island village of Capri, with its Mediterranean-inspired, warmly welcoming resort town homes.

Other villages

Other island villages are Sao Paolo with custom home sites set on more than 30 hectares, Bali with its Asian-themed first homes for younger families ranging from P3 to 5 million, and Caledonia as well as Noumea, inspired by their sun-drenched island namesakes.

The result of Island Park's master-planning is an all-encompassing sense of relaxation and recreation, the feel of being surrounded by nature's beauty in an idyllic setting, an appreciation of wide open spaces in which children can frolic, and overall, the enjoyment of unhurried and unstressed living in the splendor of a tropical setting. To visit Island Park, property previews may be arranged by calling 850-6986 and 850-2868.

AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

Oriental Garden Makati completed in August

FEDERAL Land Inc. (FedLand), the property arm of the Metrobank group, is close to completing its twin-tower executive residential condominium, the Oriental Garden Makati, just in time for the nascent recovery of property values in the country's premier central business district.

The Lotus Tower of Oriental Garden, which is already 85 percent complete, will be finished by August this year or two months ahead of the original completion target (October 2005).

FedLand has sold half of Lotus Tower's 378 units which are at pace with the robust sales of its twin, the 390-unit Orchid Tower.

The Orchid Tower, which is already 95 percent sold out, has turned over 300 units or 77 percent of the building to buyers since July last year.

THE COZY Thai-inspired gazebo just right for that tasteful, urban lifestyle that can double as a guest room.

These residents are now enjoying the plush amenities which include a 15-meter lapping pool and children's wading pool, an aerobics and fitness gym, children's Moongate playground, multipurpose function room with outdoor al fresco garden, meditation nooks with koi pond and Thai-inspired gazebos.

The lobby of both the Orchid and Lotus Tower are fully operational with 3 high-speed elevators per tower, and grand reception lobbies. With dual access from both Chino Roces and Export Avenues, residents enjoy full security 24 hours a day.

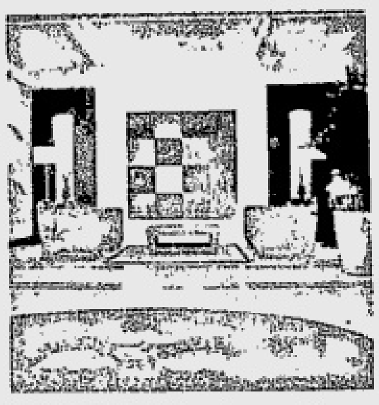
"We are delighted to see that the residents are enjoying the pool and other amenities because this is really Federal Land's intention for them to get the best value on their investment. At the moment, Oriental Garden still enjoys being one of the best deals in the market in terms of building specifications, price per square meter and immediate availability," said Federal Land president Alfred Ty.

Oriental Garden's completion in just under three years from groundbreaking is consistent with FedLand's track record of erecting high-rise buildings and delivering these units within or oftentimes, ahead of schedule.

"We take pride in delivering our quality projects on time to maintain our clients' trust in our over 30 years of operation," said Ty.

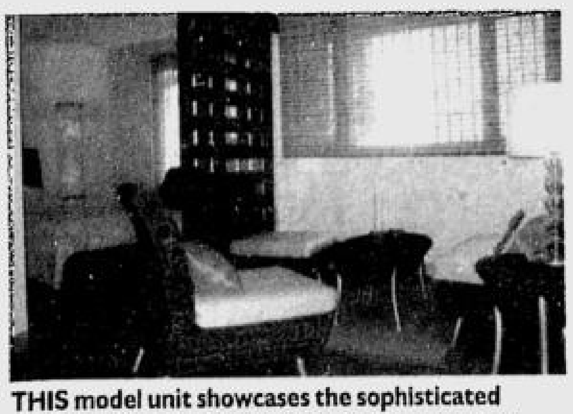
The completion of the Oriental Garden twin towers gives buyers a unique opportunity to ride on the property rebound in Makati while property values and interest rates are still low. For the first time in nearly a decade, real estate prices have started to inch up after bottoming out last year, vacancy rate has eased down, and rent has gone up slightly. Industry observers expect Makati to lead the recovery in the residential segment of the market with rising demand for luxury units.

Buyers have a choice of studio, one-bedroom, two-bedroom units and penthouse suites while attractive payment terms for as low as P14,000 per month are available. These units include one parking slot and provisions for cable TV, washer/dryer hookups, stand-by generator and telephone lines.


THE ELEGANT and expansive area of Lotus Tower lobby of Oriental Gardens.

Oriental Garden stands out among high-rise buildings in Makati, with its lush garden setting in its façade, has two lobby entrances, three high-speed elevators per tower, secured dual entrances from both Chino Roces Avenue and Export Avenue, and a convenience market, coffee shop, Metrobank with ATM access, Internet gaming and computer supply store now open at the ground floor.

Apart from its strategic location in Makati City, Oriental Garden's offers buyers a wide choice of views through its floor-to-ceiling windows—Makati's city lights, Parañaque's wide open fields or the breathtaking Manila Bay sunset.


THIS model unit showcases the sophisticated abodes for every family's living needs with a wide choice of great view of the bustling city.

ELEGANCE is on a high note so dining here would be a little less than ordinary.

THIS fully equipped gym is just one of the plush amenities offered by Oriental Gardens Makati.

CHILDREN can have a great time at the Oriental Gardens children's Moongate playground.

Your guide in setting up home offices

By Dianne M. Villafuerte

FENG SHUI

THERE'S no denying the truth that each of us yearns to be our own bosses—technically. We dream of having that business of our own, where we do not have to answer to anyone but ourselves (and clients, that is), leave the comforts of our home and rush every morning (or afternoon or evening) just so we'd make it to that Bundy clock on time.

We fantasize about working from that desk where the TV, the kitchen and the bedroom is but a few meters away. Ah, the happiness in being self-employed.

Specific area

Feng shui practitioners believe however that home offices should be set up in a specific area of the house. Though it is definitely important to have a productive work space, it is also necessary that your home office does not affect the energy of your house or apartment.

Stephanie Roberts, author of the Fast Feng Shui book series, tells us that it is most ideal to have an area that is reserved only for your home business in order to keep work and home energies as separate as possible. And that goes even for those who engage in small, part-time enterprises. (Sideline, *raket*, moonlighting. Call it what you may but more and more people are venturing into small businesses in an effort to augment their incomes. The soaring prices of basic commodities are prompting a lot of us averagely paid Filipinos to engage in part-time money-making "quests" just so we can make ends meet let alone achieve a decent standard of living.)

Separate entrance

For those who work at home professionally, Roberts suggests providing a separate entrance for clients and business associates. The feng shui practitioner deems it not a good idea having to make clients pass through your living space before getting to your home office.

This may take your clients' focus away from your business and even make them question your professionalism or capabilities. If your home office is located at the side or back of the house, Roberts advises having a clear pathway which leads to it so even first-time clients will know which way to go.

Not suitable

Some areas of the house are not suitable locations for a home office and these are at the center of the home, the bedroom, or underneath the staircase. A home office located at the house's center is said to make work dominate over the family's life. Meanwhile, using a corner of the bedroom for your home office will either disrupt the calming, sleep-inducing chi (energy) that is needed in the room and prevent you from resting completely or make you feel lethargic and sleepy while you're trying to work.

If you have no other choice but to set up your home office in your bedroom, a divider such as a screen, a curtain or an accordion-style sliding door just so to separate your sleeping area from your workstation may do.

A home office situated underneath a staircase is at the receiving end of oppressive overhead energy which may cause headaches and difficulty in concentrating.

If your home office is set up next to a bathroom, just make sure that your desk and the toilet bowl are not opposite each other on the same wall. Feng shui theory believes that this signifies your business being flushed down the toilet.

Ceilings

Roberts also advises against placing your home office in a room with low or slanted ceilings.

A low ceiling is said to constrain aspirations and keeps one from exploring future possibilities. A slanted ceiling, on the other hand, is said cause energy imbalance.

This imbalance can be remedied by stationing your desk on the taller side of the room and reserving the lower side for cabinets, book cases or other storage.

Home offices with low or slanted ceilings should also be installed with plants and lights that point upward. In addition, give much attention to proper ventilation and sufficient lighting.

Email comments at fengshui.inquirer@gmail.com.

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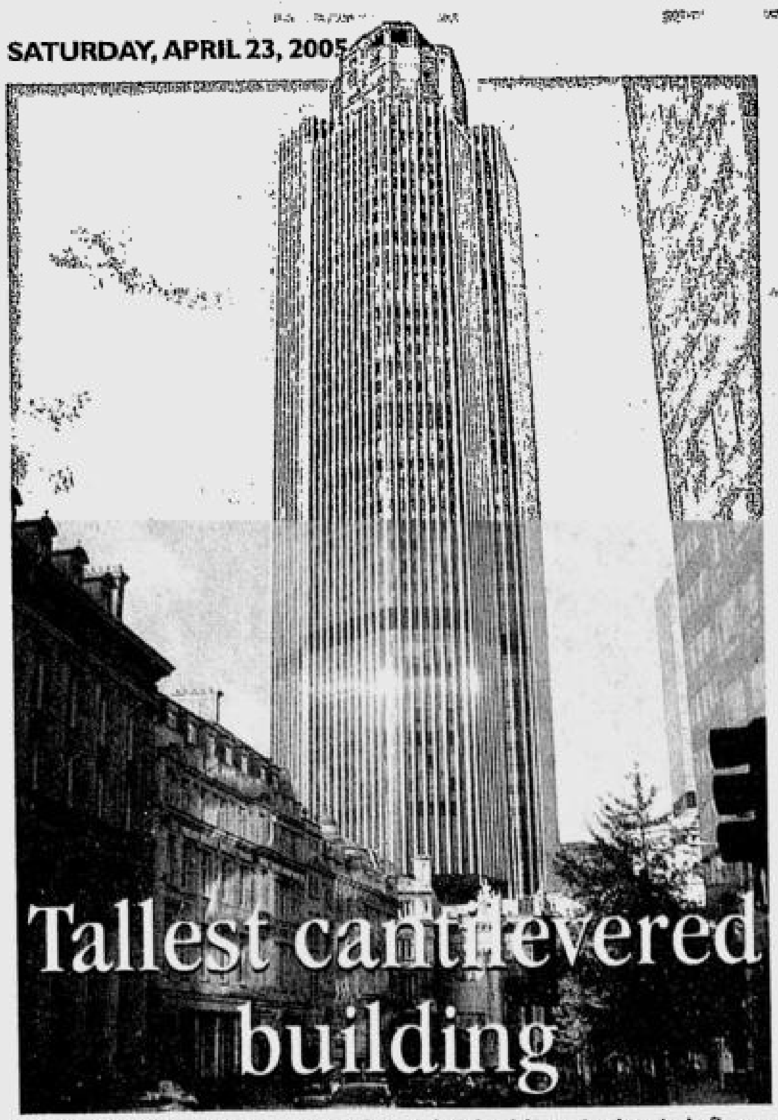

Tallest cantilevered building

AMAZING STRUCTURES

THE GUINNESS World Records lists London's International Finance Centre as the tallest cantilevered building at 600 feet and four inches.

Formerly known as the National Westminster Bank (NatWest Tower), it cost around £72 million to build and was designed by Richard Seifert. Completed in 1980, the giant edifice has 49 stories and three basement levels and is serviced by 21 elevators. It has two restaurants—Rhodes 24 and Vertigo 42, a champagne and seafood bar.

On April 24, 1993, an IRA bombing extensively damaged the NatWest Tower and several other buildings in the city's financial district. As a result, the tower was severely damaged and had to undergo major renovation since demolition would have been more difficult and costly.

After restoration, NatWest refurbishment NatWest decided to vacate the building, renamed it the International Finance Centre, then sold it to Greycoat Estates Ltd., a small UK property company. The lofty structure was then renamed Tower 42 in reference to its 42 floors, and turned into a general-purpose office building now occupied by an assortment of companies. *Dianne M. Villafuerte*

New interchange offers bright prospects for investors

COMPANIES usually take into consideration a number of factors when setting up shop for the first time. There's proximity to clients, availability of adequate water and electricity, communication lines and modern infrastructure. Of all these, an efficient road network plays a key role as it affects the transfer of goods and services from one place to the other.

With the opening of ABI-Greenfield Interchange and a 10-km circumferential road within Greenfield City, businesses operating in the area now have an alternate route going to Laguna from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) and Port Area, thereby ensuring faster delivery of goods, people and industrial activities.

A major infrastructure project of Greenfield Development Corp. and Asia Brewery Inc. in cooperation with the Philippine National Construction Corp. and the Toll Regulatory Board, this 260-million interchange is expected to offer lasting solution to the burgeoning traffic problem in the area.

Promising investment site

As more and more businesses and their employees are now expected to flock to Sta. Rosa because of this new development, the site may very well be seen as the newest business, commercial and residential hub South of Manila.

GDC is one among many developers in the area that believes in the town's potential as a promising investment site. One of its projects, Greenfield City, is a master-planned community that's envisioned to transform Sta. Rosa into a bustling, cosmopolitan district.

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

GDC vice president Duane Santos says, "More than accessibility, the new interchange also opens up our market to nearby towns and municipalities."

Great take-off point

Its retail/commercial component, Paseo de Santa Rosa, is now also undergoing a facelift with the opening of new-branded factory outlets for value-added shopping. Twelve new bars and restaurants will also be put up to create bigger excitement among residents looking for better quality dining and entertainment.

Says Santos: "We had excellent response for our existing factory outlets and we want to maintain that by offering new brands at heavily discounted prices throughout the whole year."

Relaxing outdoor lifestyle

Santos says that a greatly improved Paseo De Santa Rosa, which provides a relaxing outdoor lifestyle, will be a great take-off point for an intended shopping mall to be put up in the area. To be called Laguna Central, this new development will be made to cater to a different market.

While Paseo De Santa Rosa shall continue carrying its distinct charm that many patrons have already come to love, those who want to shop in a typical mall environment may choose Laguna Central.

Premier business district

Santa Rosa Business Park, Greenfield City's premier business district, will also be just as busy with the completion of Southern Luzon Medical Hospital. By the third quarter this year, the first residential project in Greenfield City called "The Garland" will also be launched.

Finally, GDC is now also closing in on several dealers and retailers of automotive spare parts and accessories for its Greenfield Automall.

Santos says, "We have a standing invitation to select industry players and the response thus far has been very promising."

This early, a number of businesses have already started taking notice of all these developments. With the ABI-Greenfield Interchange, a major access infrastructure, already in place, those in the automobile, shopping, sports, market and other major industries will find themselves lucky to be at the receiving end of all the wonderful benefits that all these developments in Greenfield City bring.

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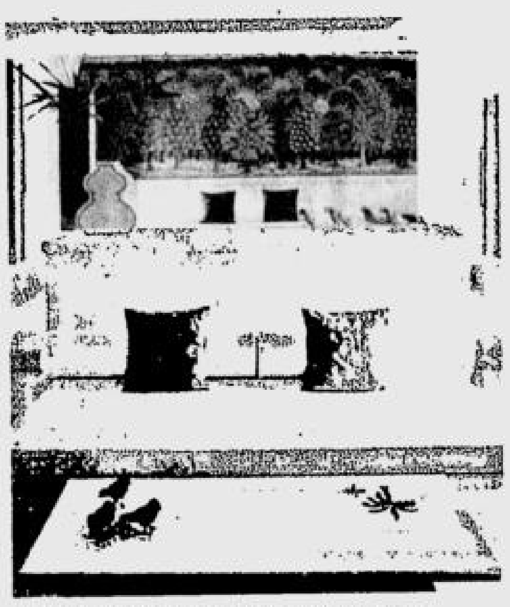
India on my mind



SIMPLICITY and restraint: this is what separates the hotel from the ornateness of the raj palace hotels.

NEEMRANA HOTEL ... at dusk

> **The present is the necessary product of all the past, the necessary cause of all the future.**
> **—Robert G. Ingersoll**

INTO SPACE

Pinky Cruz

OH what a hangover! I am still reeling from last week's article on the retro comeback. Yet here I am, not quite getting enough of the past. Call it nostalgia of the glory of a childhood I sorely missed. But, undeniably, there is more longing to point back to history for inspiration.

Even what technology offers becomes somewhat incomplete without the soul of old. Looking closely at the works of today's design geniuses—Frank Gehry, Philip Starck , Kelly Hoppen and Ron Arad—you will sense a yearning to return to some roots of childhood and cultures past. Summations of yesterday's influences.

A passage to India

Such is the case of this world-class designer, Lekha Poddar. Inwardly seeking the richness brought about by her own cultural heritage, she managed to bring a certain newness to the modern cacophony of styles evident on this side of India. She is the genius behind the world-renowned Rajasthan hotel, Devi Garh. Absolutely Indian and Divine!

This artist of a woman is no foreigner to designing palatial hotels. She has to her credit the creation of Neemrana, a restoration that prepared this merchant's daughter to tackle the magnificent Devi Garh.

Rhythmic and romantic

Once, before completing Neemrana, she spotted this old, forsaken Haveli (fortress), but not hidden from her is the majestic pose it still bears.

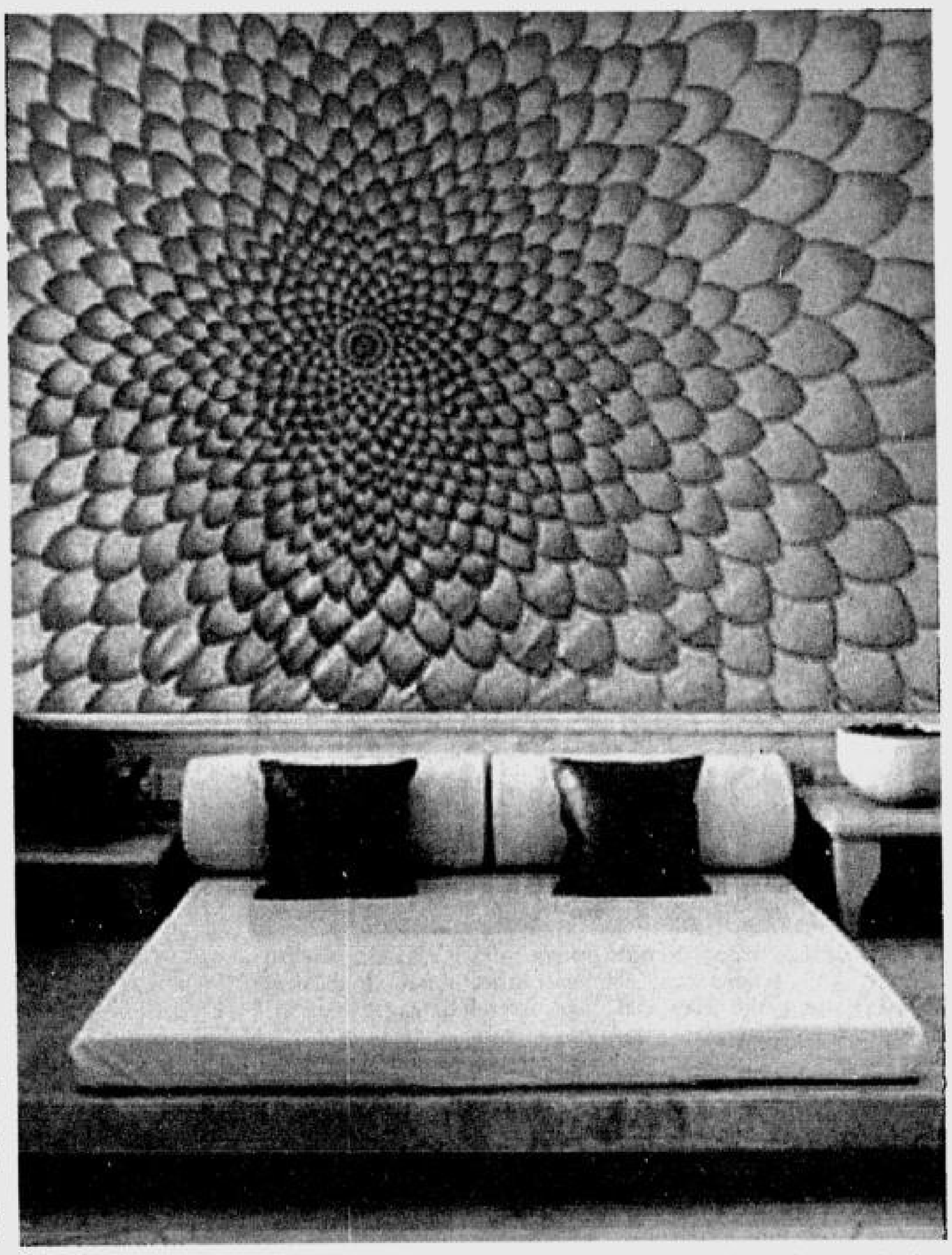
And what we see now and hear of this 17th century Fort palace is a product of a decade of pure romance with the richness similar to an urdu, the rhythmic poems extolling the intricacies of Mughal India. This is a feat that is being sought and featured in design and travel magazines for honoring the exoticism of her heritage, yet disproving all western misconceptions of what an Indian flavor should be.

Vintage India

Devi Garh suites vary in layout and materials, but all encompass the feeling of space and layering within a historical royal setting.

Poddar used semi-precious stones, including red jasper, lapiz lazuli, malachite, cornelian and mother of pearl, which add to the unique vintage feel of the hotel. Painted silk panels, local marble work and brocade textiles also add to the magnificent design of the suite.

Marveling at such beauty, I take a harder look at what truly inspires and I realize one just has to look inside his heart.



IN CHARACTERISTIC marble and pure silk, there is Ayurvedic serenity in each room that is quite eastern.

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14 new reasons to hie off to Eastwood City

EASTWOOD City in Libis, Quezon City, is a cozy pleasure zone that combines Mediterranean-inspired architecture with the laid-back lifestyle of downtown Miami.

The park's unique overall design, with splashes of bright yellows, reds, blues and salmon hues, graceful palm trees, cascading fountains, lush gardens and cobbled walkways, incorporates the best of public spaces and private business, ushering in a dynamic shift in urban commercial development.

Lifestyle center

As a lifestyle center, Eastwood City Walk brings together the advantages of a mall, but in a more intimate setting, with an eclectic mix of shops to choose from. It is a relaxing sanctuary for tired and weary souls by day, and a hip and jumping gathering place for Manila's party set as soon as night falls.

Among the stores that provide customers with world-class products and impeccable services at the Eastwood City Walk are some of the most stylish local and international names in the world of fashion.

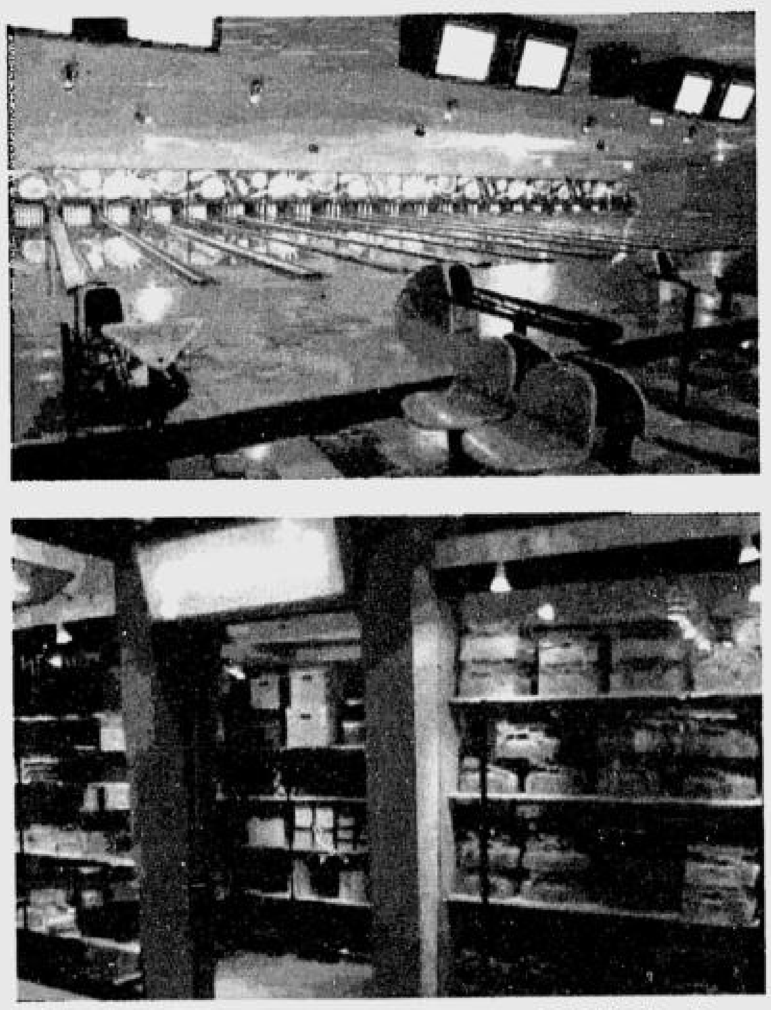
Each one of them has carved its own niche in the industry and enjoys a cult following among the city's hip social set and upwardly-mobile urban professionals.

New shops

The laid-back and free-spirited environment has spawned many new lifestyle shops and luxury boutiques like Evita Peroni, one of the world's leading hair accessories shop with branches in 26 countries.

The first Philippine outlet located at City Walk 2 is destined to be the place for accessory lovers, whether they want to go flirty, frivolous or shamelessly seductive. Bring your inner Carrie Bradshaw to the forefront at Sole & Co. located at the second floor of City Walk 2. Renowned for its classy and funky footwear, this shoe haven is bound to become the place to see and be seen for the metro's shoe fanatics.

Acknowledged as the country's most popular clothing brand, Bench has opened its doors at the first floor of City Walk 2 where fashionistas will have a field day going through its racks of classic and chic separates that people can be very creative with.



PAENG'S Bowling and Billiards (top photo) and Grassroots, a specialty store

Voracious readers will get their fill at Papyvore at the second floor, City Walk 2 with almost 100 titles of both local and foreign magazines. There is also Toy Town for the kids at heart. Grassroots is the place to go for decorative gift and file boxes made out of paper, while Designer Blooms is floral heaven.

Film Relics at the fourth floor of City Walk 2 sells the cutest stationery, picture frames, clocks and magnets. For people who want some pampering and tender loving care, Solemates at the Fashion Village at City Walk 1 offers authentic Thai foot massage with a holistic twist.

New dining outlets

Gourmands will fall in love with the new dining outlets at Eastwood City. Known for its wide variety of delectable desserts near the Fuente Circle of City Walk 1, Cheesecake, etc. also offers *sisig* and schueblig sandwiches.

Fruitas at the second floor of City Walk 2 serves up healthy fruits mixes amid a refreshing farm ambiance.

There is also Dencio's, Yellow Cab Pizza and Pasto at the Fuente Circle for authentic Italian cuisine.

For those who love to bar hop after a day in school or at the office, they may want to check out Gweilos at City Walk 1 where people can watch their favorite sports on the huge screen or listen to live alternative acoustic bands on selected nights.

For your little tykes, there is Laro, a daycare center where kids can play while their parents are out shopping or watching the latest blockbuster movie.

Designed as a village center, Eastwood City Walk offers its regular habitues and visitors innumerable shops for lifestyle and convenience. Everything is just a few steps away, whether you are in the market for the right outfit, or simply want to unwind after a busy day at the office. The abundance of al fresco areas give the place a rustic, quaint and charming ambiance that is a welcome respite from today's fast-paced world.

One-stop destination

Eastwood City Walk is the newest and most innovative one-stop entertainment and shopping destination for a generation with a passion for the uncompromising lifestyle of leisure and entertainment.

It has emerged into a sensational pleasure hub that combines the sweet, serene mood of nature and the fast, upbeat flavor of a mall that's always in motion.

TOYTOWN

Experiencing the pleasures of life at The Celebrity Place

BOK Noble, sporty and always on the go

AT 21 YEARS old, Mitchell "Bok" Noble already owns a significant piece of investment, which gives him good returns in the form of comfortable lifestyle on a daily basis. He bought a studio-type condominium unit at The Celebrity Place in Diliman, Quezon City.

Sporty and always on the go, Bok gets to relax at his condo unit after school. A hotel and restaurant management student at one of the prestigious schools in Manila, Bok has a taste for class and style, two things he says he finds in his home.

"When I'm stressed out and want to relax after a hard day's work, I find comfort in my house and its serene environment. Then in the morning, I take a dip at the pool which is conveniently near," says Bok, a son of a town councilor in Pangasinan province.

Friendly payment schemes

With the help of his parents, Bok bought a studio-type unit with a floor area of 30 square meters for only P1.9 million. He made a 30-percent down payment, with the remaining 70-percent to be settled in five years with a minimum interest rate of 17 percent per annum. The developer offers various friendly payment schemes for buyers to choose from.

The unit comes with a free parking space set at a beautiful landscaped park expanding almost two hectares in an exclusive and protected atmosphere with a perimeter wall and 24-hour security. From a landscaped entrance gate with guardhouse, residents feel the comfort as they step into the courtyard.

Real big bonus

But the real big bonus, according to Bok, is his lifetime membership at the famous Celebrity Club, which is just a few steps from his place.

"I love swimming at the Club's Olympic-size pool in the morning," he says. "Afterward, I take my breakfast at the poolside bar or go to the gym to play basketball."

Among the facilities and features at the classy sports and recreational establishment that come free with living at The Celebrity Place are an Olympic-size swimming pool, a basketball court, tennis and badminton courts, bowling alley, a billiards hall, jacuzzi and spa, function rooms, a bar and restaurant, and a coffee shop.

Oftentimes, Bok says he gets to meet movie celebrities and beautiful people that make his stay at The Celebrity Place really exciting.

Location

Strategically located near premier educational institutions such as the University of the Philippines and Ateneo de Manila University, the project can be accessed via Katipunan Avenue or Commonwealth Avenue.

Sitting on Capitol Drive in Diliman near the Broadcast City, the Mediterranean-inspired The Celebrity Place is an upper-middle income to high-end residential project composed of 28 townhouses and 71 condominium units, with prices ranging from P2.2 million to P4.7 million for condominium units and P7.6 million to P9.3 million for townhouses.

The condominium units come in different sizes ranging from the 30-sq-m studio type to the 46-sq-m one-bedroom unit and the 60- or 66-sq-m two-bedroom flat. Units at the ground floor have a garden and all units have at least one assured parking slot each for free.

The Celebrity Place a project of One Asia Development Corp. and Riviera Land Corp. For inquiries, please call 687-3706 or 687-3704.

PIONEER POINTE BREAKS GROUND
Groundbreaking ceremonies were held recently for Pioneer Pointe, a 28-story residential condominium located on Pioneer Street in Mandaluyong City. Pioneer Pointe (687-1155, 687-1177) offers the advantages of living in a central location. From left are Filinvest Alabang Inc. vice president Michael Gotianun, Mandaluyong Vice Mayor Jesse Cruz, FAI executive vice president Josephine Gotianun Yap and Filinvest Land Inc. vice chair Andrew Gotianun Jr.

Land values rising at Verde Island

VERDE Island Villas is a unique ocean-view residential and recreational village on Verde Island, located off the waters of Batangas Bay, south of Batangas City and north of Calapan, Oriental Mindoro. It is well-placed to benefit not just the tourism boom, but also the investors who can avail of the amazing value at the predevelopment stage of the Verde Island project.

Today, Verde Island has fast become one of the most sought-after areas for property investment owned by Verde Island Villas Inc., a family-owned corporation of the Pastor family of Batangas City. With rising land values, this is a very wise investment that has the ability to return a big future in this pristine, serene and ecologically balanced coastal island village with the security of titled lots and top-class amenities.

This company is now open and ready for investment opportunities which include membership, tie-ups and joint ventures in real estate development. Among the possibilities are vacation residential subdivisions, world-class tourism amenities and services, commercial facilities as well as long-term lease venturing into condotel development.

Becoming part of this fantastic project by investing in the soon-to-be-built Verde Island recreational and residential community is truly a very rare opportunity. The villas will be built to heighten the exotic beauty of the land complemented by the serenity of the sea. The centerpiece of the island village is the Verde Island Resort, which is now fast-becoming a favorite tourist destination in the Philippines.

For inquiries, you may contact its Makati Marketing Office at (632) 892-7281 or (632) 892-5849.

Rockwell residential-leasing team ready for Manansala turnover

THE STAGE is set for the turnover of units to buyers of The Manansala, a twin-tower vertical development on the East block of Rockwell Center.

Developer Rockwell Land Corp. (Rockwell) says that the project will be completed way ahead of schedule, allowing them to welcome the new residents of The Manansala starting in July.

Handover preparations

Rockwell is abuzz with activities as the final touches are given to the grand lobby and as team leaders are prepped for the arrival of the occupants of The Manansala.

"Rockwell isn't one to sit on its laurels. We are carefully planning out all the details for the Manansala handover," says AVP for sales and marketing Val Soliven.

Leasing out units

She adds, "And since Manansala has been sold out since late 2004, we are gearing up in anticipation of queries on leasing Manansala units."

"Some unit owners of Manansala have already expressed interest in leasing out their residential space. Our Residential-Leasing group is actually primed to take on that challenge," reveals Soliven.

Rockwell's Residential-Leasing team was formed in the latter part of 1999, when Rockwell president Tong Padilla saw the need to provide assistance to the investors and buyers of the four residential towers that went up simultaneously in 2000 on the West block of the center.

"The leasing and materials sourcing assistance came as a natural response to the needs of our valued clientele," narrates senior sales manager Mona Manalang-Narciso, one of the pioneers of the Residential-Leasing team.

Formal service

What started off as an extension of after-sales support is now a formal service offered by Rockwell.

Says Manalang-Narciso, now the team leader for Residential-Leasing group: "In 2002, we started formally offering our Residential-Leasing services to our investors. And we've been doing it since then. Every year, we would see an increase of take-up in the units for lease, almost doubling figures from the previous year."

The market for Rockwell's leased residential units remains largely from the expatriate community, which accounts for more than 90 percent of the total occupancy. For over half a decade, Rockwell has been able to maintain relationships with multinational companies and various embassies that require expatriate housing packages. And for the same period, Rockwell was able to retain their rates at the same level as when they started off.

Depending on the unit type and whether it's unfurnished, semi-furnished or fully furnished, rental rates range from P55,000 to P120,000 a month. A term of lease is normally valid for a year. However, the Residential-Leasing team understands that contracts are drawn based on the compromise between the unit owner's conditions and the tenant's requests. In a sense, each and every contract is unique.

Rockwell lifestyle

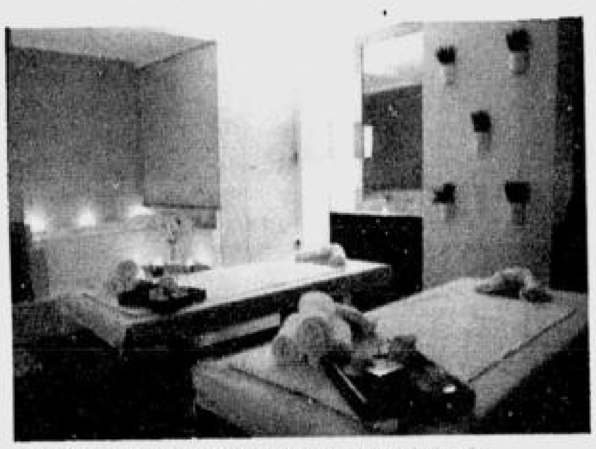
Besides having a piece of the Rockwell lifestyle, tenants are also enjoying the benefits of using the facilities of the posh Rockwell Leisure Club.

This year, the Residential-Leasing team is preparing to expand their service to include interior designing, sourcing and furnishing packages for Rockwell residents, both present and future, who are on the lookout for someone to fix up their units. Plans are also underway for setting up a full-service property management system.

"Rockwell is a cut above the rest because it offers a lifestyle. The development is a resort-haven, a self-contained community at the heart of the city. But more than that, Rockwell is a trusted brand. And we take pains in achieving customer loyalty rather than just satisfying our customer's needs or wants," adds Soliven.

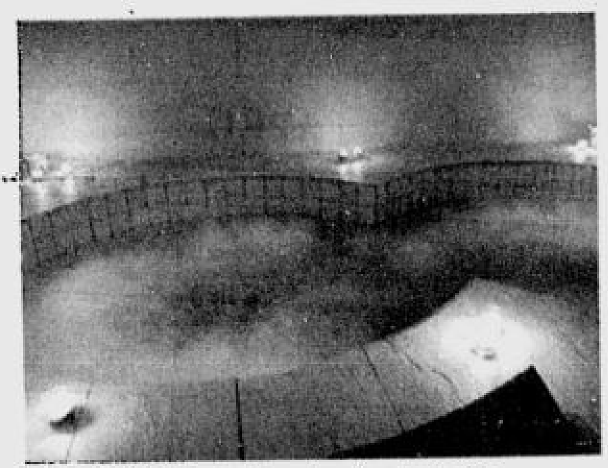
Interested parties may inquire at the Rockwell Land Leasing Department at the ground floor Rizal Tower Administration Office, 31 Residential Drive, Rockwell Center, Makati City or call 898-1780 and 898-1811.

THE MANANSALA, Rockwell Center's newest 41 story tall residential landmark, is just about complete and going through finishing touches. Rockwell Land's handover team has been busy preparing to ensure the smooth turnover of its 618 units to lucky owners beginning July this year as promised.



GUESTS are pampered with luxurious body treatments in well-appointed private rooms.

EXCEPTIONAL style and grace for the MySpa lounge for hand and foot treatment.



A TEMPTING Jacuzzi to relax tired muscles.

Interiors, ambiance attract guests to MySpa

PEOPLE are always amazed to discover MySpa. Located right in the bustling and busy urban center of Las Piñas, this upscale full service spa, wellness and fitness center appears like an unlikely mirage.

"Many of our guests remark that, really, there is simply nothing that compares to MySpa here in Las Piñas," said Abigail Valdes, business development officer of Manuela Corp. "They always tell me how happy they are," said Abigail, "to find what they say is a 'serene haven' in the midst of stressful urban living."

A treasure tucked in the renovated east wing, second level of Starmall, MySpa is fast becoming a favorite place for residents in the area—from stressed-out homemakers to stressed-out yuppies and executives.

Keen eye for details

From the stylized entrance at the second level that leads to the stairs up to the spa, guests are cued to expect an experience different from the usual. With the interiors tastefully designed by Atelier Almario who went for the powerfully simple Zen appeal, her keen eye for details kept both expansive and reflective spaces always interesting with a mix of Asian pieces and modern touches.

Inspired design ideas such as combining modern leather easy chairs with the very Oriental ningbo cabinets for the television set in the common area or using a gracefully revolving door for the two separate wings, are fresh surprises that capture the imagination. In the private rooms, Almario has successfully designed calm spaces flowing with quiet and soothing energy, aided naturally by soft lights. The sound of the fountains, the feel of the ubiquitous wood, the scent of aromatherapy candles—all make for an ambiance totally conducive to relaxation and healing.

A BEAUTIFUL revolving door welcomes both men's and women's wings.

At par with the best

Even more important, apart from the interiors and the ambiance, it is the service that sets MySpa apart. "We have the best therapists and the best facilities," Valdes confidently states. "We are at par with the best spas anywhere, and we maintain affordable rates."

Highly trained therapists and staff pamper every guest that enters their door. Courteous, pleasant and professional, everyone takes the extra mile to make their patron's visit a real treat. Finding a favorite therapist here would not be difficult to do, as guests have a pick among the best trained in any city.

Best services

Services offered by MySpa include body massages, facial treatments, hand and feet rituals, body treatments, including doctor-supervised treatments under Dr. Joel Mendez. Among the most popular of MySpa's services are the 90-minute MySpa Special massage, the Shiroi Facial for women and the Utoko Facial for men. The 60-minute Xiamen Foot Reflex is also very popular as this traditional Chinese reflexology treatment truly soothes and pampers.

The MySpa Wellness and Fitness Hub also has a state-of-the-art gym and aerobics studio, plus two badminton courts. It offers packages for people who want to avail of all these facilities and services.

The spa has an ongoing promo for the summer season: For every Body Scrub treatment, guests can get a Swedish massage for free.

MySpa is in Starmall, at C.V.Starr Avenue, Philamlife Village, Pamplona and Las Piñas. For inquiries, call 872-5235 or 874-8803.

The best time to own a house

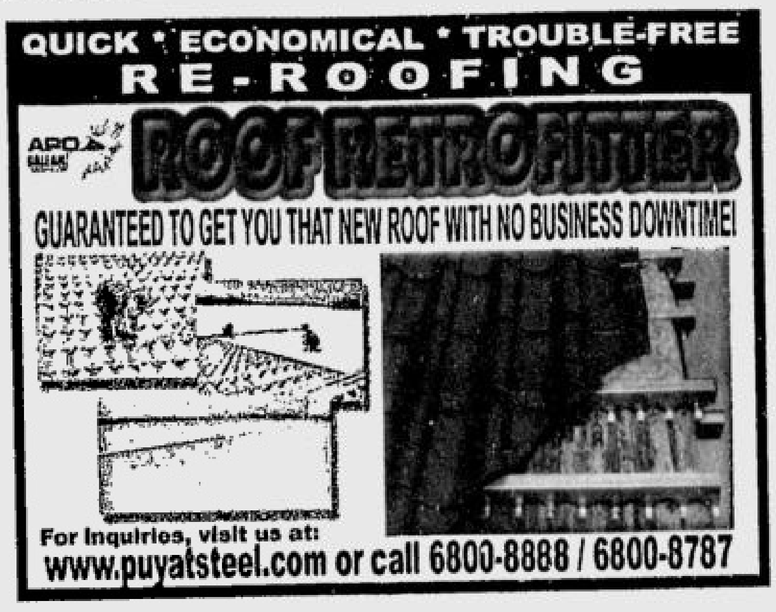
THE BEST time to own a house is now—while you're young and can afford it. Many young professionals and newly married couples keep on delaying plans to do so, prioritizing other things to spend on.

The wise among us would say, "It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark..." Must you wait when you're old and your resources meant for something of more importance before you end up building a roof over your head?

It's best to plan when there is sufficient time. The opportune time is when you have a steady flow of income or generating wealth if self-employed because home loan repayment is usually amortized monthly. Past our prime, our finances should be meant to sustain our retirement years and buy maintenance medication.

If you think the time is ripe for you to make this decision, you have to remember the fundamentals of home buying—cost, size and location.

- **Set a budget for your dream house.** Determine how much you can only spend and be careful to make provisions—about 15 to 20 percent of your budget for price increases and a little luxury you might want to incorporate in your house.
- **Set the size you feel comfortable with.** Would it be a two-story or one-story structure? How many bedrooms would be appropriate? The worst thing you can do is to buy a house that you don't want to live in.
- **Set the location.** If it is in the city where space is limited, a townhouse or a condominium unit might be appropriate.



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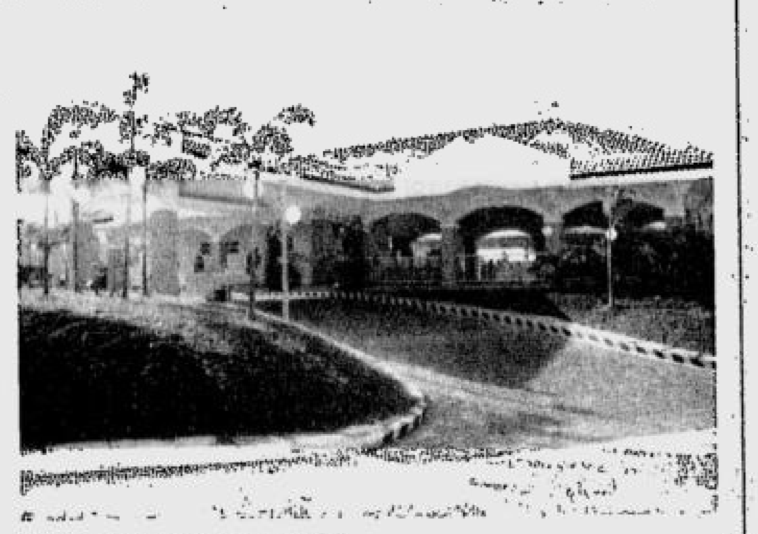


CLUBHOUSE OPENING
St. Gabriel Heights, a 14.3-hectare residential project nestled in the cool, natural scenery of Antipolo City, recently inaugurated its clubhouse with a fun activity titled "Water Fun." The resort-like swimming pool, which sprawls along the club's expanse, offers lots of summer fun and water activities for children and adults. St, Gabriel is a community of well-designed homes in a masterplanned neighborhood created by LPHI, a subsidiary of Ayala Land Inc.

Handyman sets standard in paint technology

PAINTS have a major impact on the overall esthetics of a space, sometimes even more than the flooring and furnishings. Despite this, however, paint selection is often an afterthought, a most often substituted item in construction projects and at times, the last thing on the checklist of a contractor or homeowner.

A current development is about to change the face of paint industry and could set the standard in paint technology today: Handyman Do It Best Paint Center.

This is according to US-based paint expert David Smith, retail paint development manager of Do It Best—one of the largest hardware cooperatives in the United States, of which Handyman is the exclusive member for the Philippines.

AT THE PAINT Center: (L-R) Johnson Go, David Smith, Ryan Benneth Sison and Arnold Viri

Smith recently flew in from Fort Wayne, Indiana, as part of his twice-yearly scheduled visits to Handyman branches in the country. Together with Handyman's general manager Johnson Go and division merchandise manager for construction Ryan Benneth Sison, the US executive toured several Handyman branches and trained the staff involved in this new paint technology.

Free paint mixing

As the byword in the local Do It Yourself (DIY) industry, Handyman is not only fully equipped with a wide range of finishing, repair, maintenance, lifestyle and decorative products of superior quality. It is also proud to introduce another pioneering service—the Handyman Do It Best Paint Center. Located at select Handyman Do It Best Center branches—Robinsons Place Pioneer, Robinsons Place Ermita, and Festival Mall—it is a service station that offers free computerized paint mixing service for its exclusive brand, Do It Best Select Paints.

The fully automated paint center boasts of hundreds of colors from which customers can create unlimited combinations and mix-and-match different shades to achieve hues that suit their moods and preferences.

Said Smith: "Customers get the colors they want, whenever they want them because the Photo Spectrometer Eye scans and produces the exact same colors. There is no margin for error. We use the latest technology in the paint industry."

Optimistic

Handyman is optimistic that they will successfully conquer the Philippine market. "We are very customer-friendly. Aside from the limitless color choices, our customers can be assured of water-based, odorless, lead-free products that come from the No. 1 paint manufacturers in the US," Sison added.

Do It Best Select Paints also boast a wide range of paint mixtures according to texture, sheer and applicability. In addition to the basic flat, acrylic latex and satin or semi-glossy coats, they also carry decorative paints, wax finish, stains and seals, accents, among others.

These miscellaneous paint-related products are perfect for any home's interior or exterior spaces, are resistant to blistering, peeling and fading, waterproof and protect against mildew, chemicals, UV rays and moisture.

Value for money

The Handyman Do It Best Paint Center offers value-for-money because of its one-coat coverage, outstanding color retention and durability. "In the past, if a customer wants made-to-order paint, it takes the supplier two to three weeks to import it. Often, aside from the long wait and the steep shipment fees, the paint delivered is not the exact hue the customer ordered," Smith, explained.

With Handyman, one gets the color he wants—within five minutes! Moreover, its state-of-the-art database system not only measures the color combinations but also files the customer's information in case of repeat purchase.

Suggestions

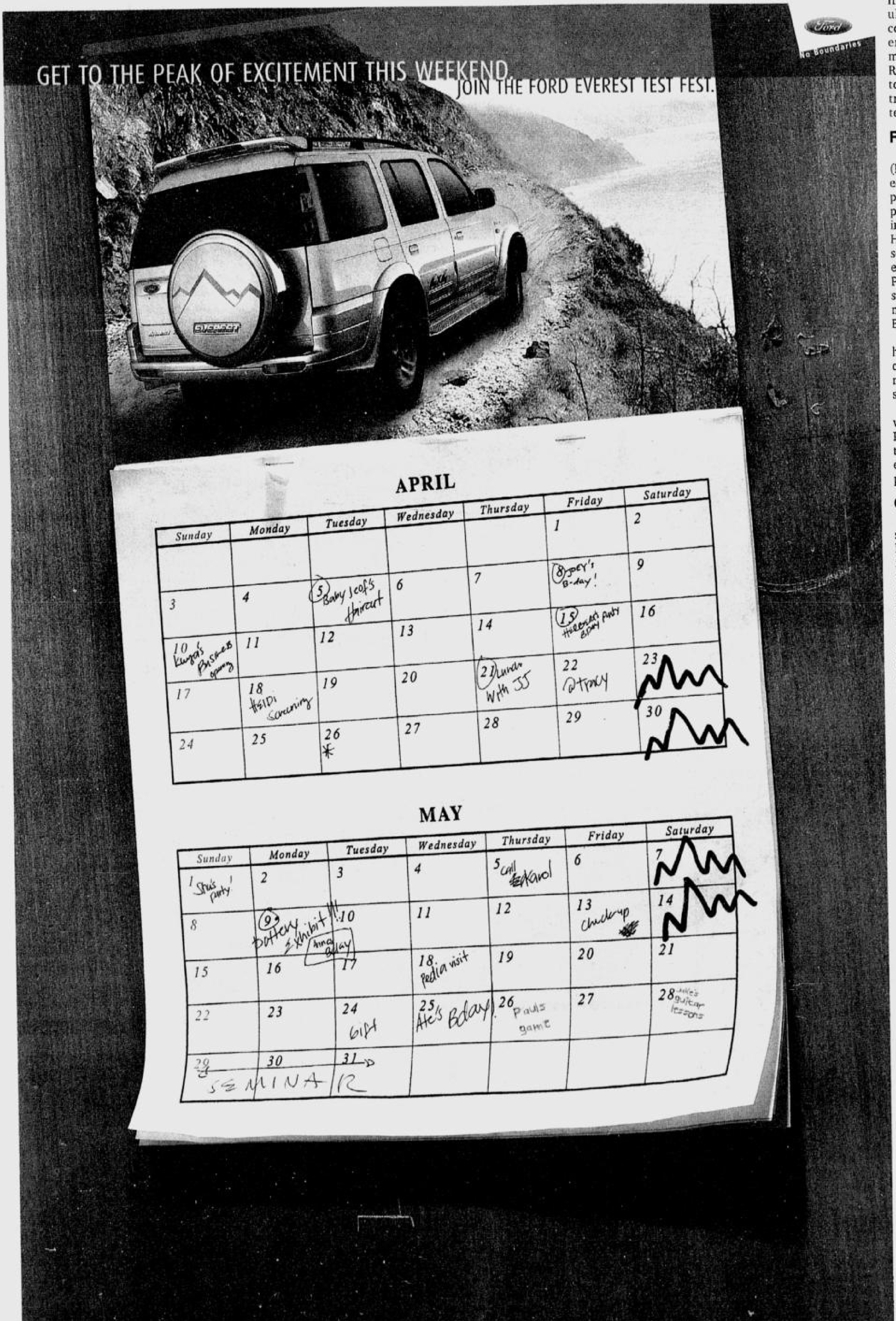
According to Smith, although dark greens, purples and earth colors are today's trends, people are becoming more adventurous with their choices. "Sometimes, when they see a particular color or texture in a commercial establishment, they want to achieve the same effect in their homes," Smith observed. This is where Handyman comes in: "We give suggestions on how to bring that same ambiance to their homes," he added.

Beyond paints, Handyman also offers helpful advice and suggestions for paint mixing and application. The staff is undergoing continuous training so they could, in turn, fully service and educate DIY-ers about paints. Plans of conducting paint seminars and demos are also underway.

Quality paints

The quality of the paint will determine how good the paint job will be. Thus Smith encouraged everyone to always choose quality paints.

"Unlike ordinary paints that last for an average of five years, 'Do It Best Select Paints' could last for many more years. Consider the one-time labor cost and one-coat coverage and you will be saving a lot of money in the long run," he explained.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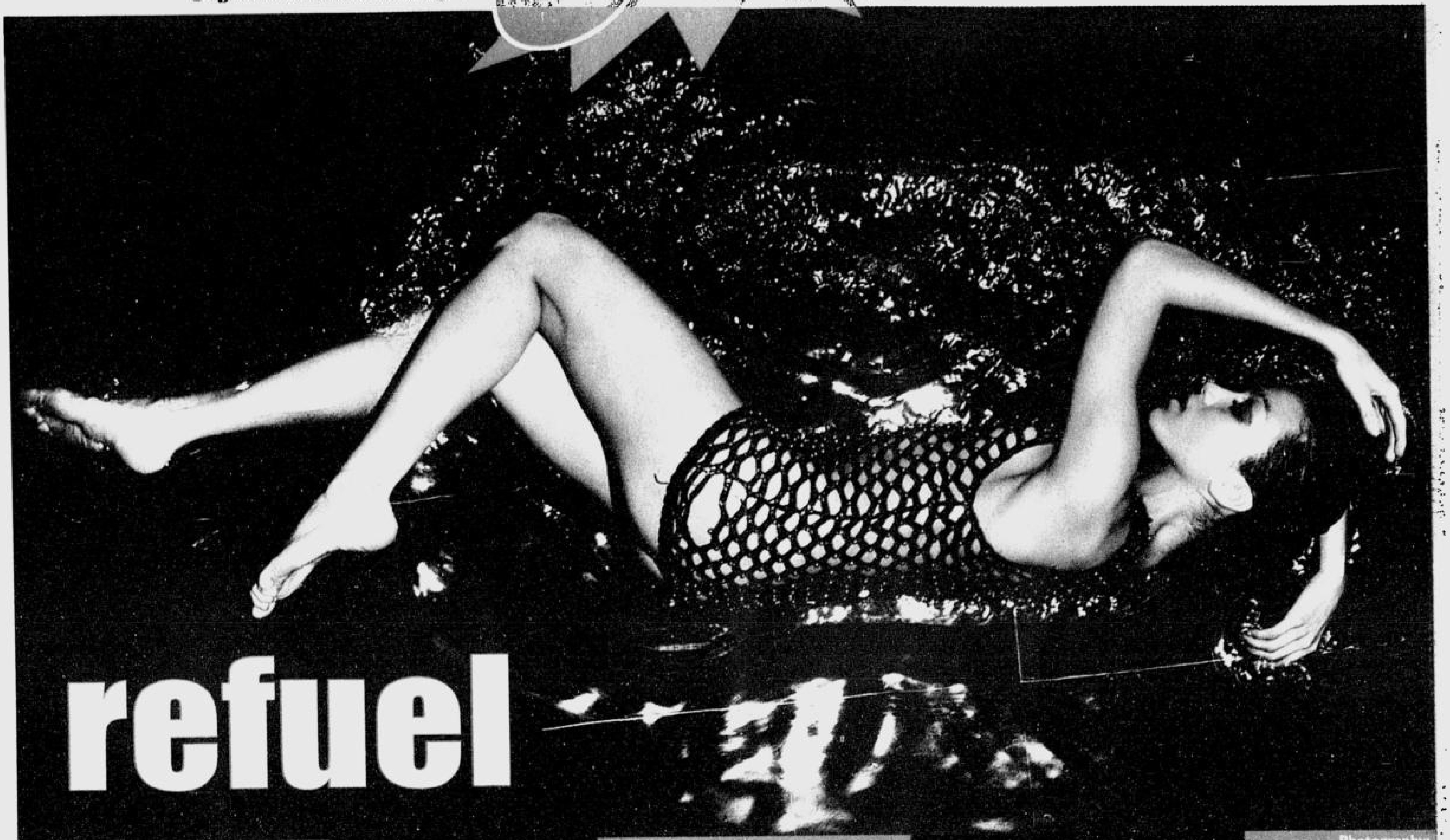

refuel

Bikinis, babes and boys! page E1

What now, Jao? page D1

The future, according to Diesel page F2

Meditate with Raya Mananquil page F1

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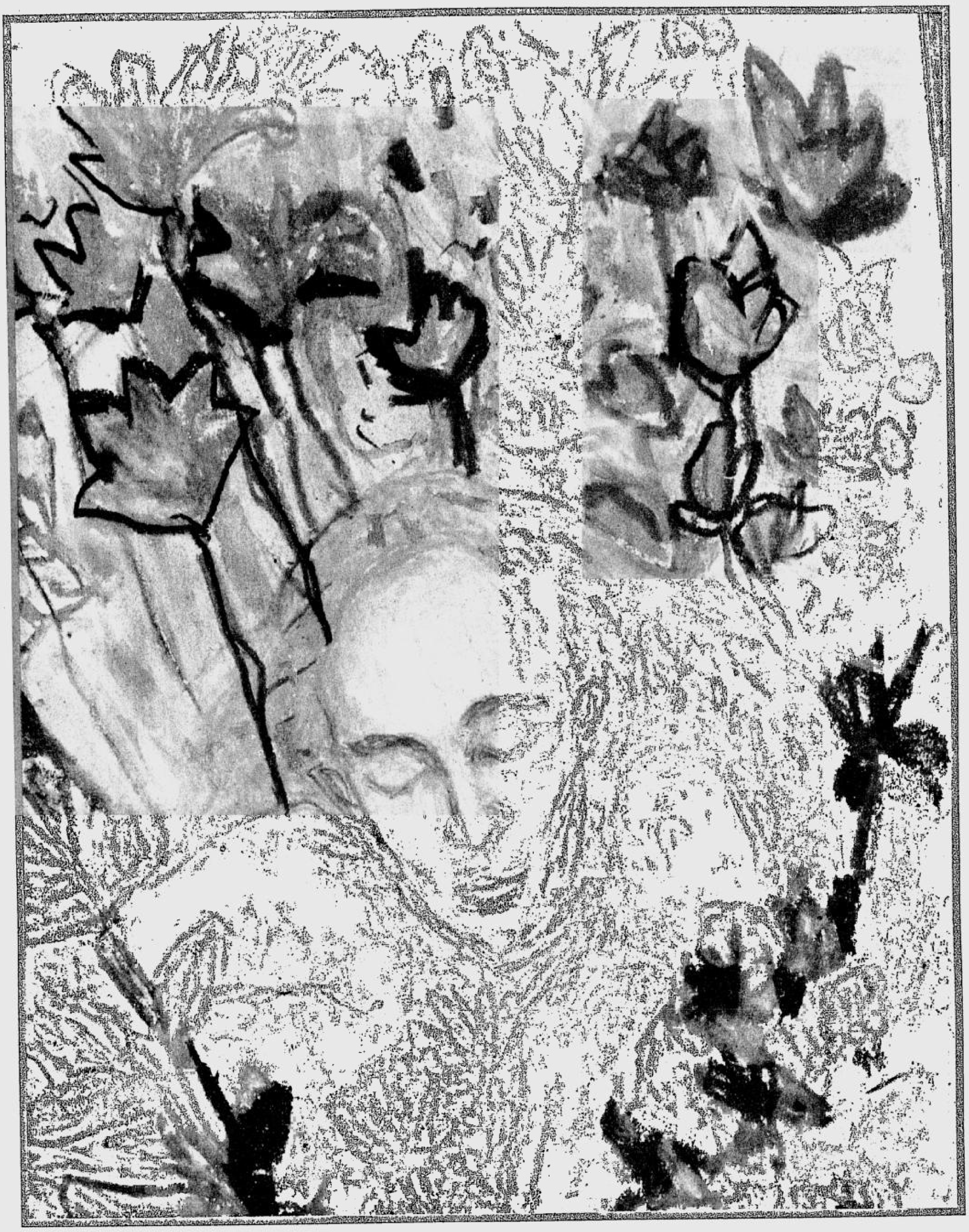


Livin La Vida Luna

Harness the full potency of the moon by making a wish

By Katrina Holigores
Original artwork by Jason Moss

WE ARE a superstitious lot. Though the Philippines is said to be more than 90 percent Catholic, I cannot throw spilled salt over my shoulder without hitting someone who has at one point "dabbled" in supposed non-Catholic rituals of astrology, fortune telling, feng shui, or avoiding walking under a ladder because it's "*malas*" (bad luck).

I remember as early as the age of 5, my mother would say no to putting a purse or bag containing money directly on the floor because it would supposedly send one's fortune down. (Down where, to the government?)

The opposite of wanting to prevent bad luck is of course, wanting good luck. And the theme for this weekend is RENEW! RECHARGE! What's even more appropriate is this weekend brings about the full moon, coupled with a lunar eclipse.

It has long been believed that the moon has special powers, and when it is full (as it will be by Sunday) witches allegedly come out and men turn into nasty, fanged, furry beasts… (what else is new). The moon can also affect moods, hence the term (and this is my own theory) "making moony-moony" so all of a sudden you find yourself dating a witch or a werewolf. Before you pass any judgment, look in the mirror first, you may be in desperate need of a shave or your laugh now resembles a cackle.

Kidding aside, the full moon's potency is even recognized by practitioners of astanga (power) yoga. They will not practice a full moon day believing that their bodies become more susceptible to injuries and use the day for meditation and rest instead.

A lunar eclipse comes only with a full moon twice a year. Under an eclipse the true nature of a person or a situation in your life will be revealed to you. Take any message you hear at the time of an eclipse seriously, see the news as more or less a non-negotiable item and try to move on. Bide your time and do not take drastic actions, or give ultimatums during an eclipse, give yourself a couple of weeks when the air has cleared to make your next move.

So how exactly is this about renewing or starting anew?

Eclipses can give you epiphanies, help or give you chances to do things you never thought were possible! A TV show contract, a record or publishing deal may be offered to you. In short, an eclipse may open a door that was previously closed.

Now is the time to harness the full potency of the moon and the accompanying eclipse by a wish. Normal practice is to wish upon a star but I never have the patience to wait around for one to "fall" (no offense, Ate Guy).

I have prepared two simple wishing rituals for both beginners and more intermediate believers. I must stress that when you wish, you MUST first be grateful, and have a peaceful state of mind. Wishing out of desperation, hate, anger or revenge just boomerangs. If you don't want the additional megaton amperage of the moon adding on to the negativity, then take a long hard look at what it is you're really wishing for.

Beginner and intermediate

Beginner wisher: Take a piece of unmarked white paper, preferably from an unused pad. White symbolizes innocence and purity of intention. Get a red-inked pen (red symbolizes passion) and write down your wish. There are no guidelines to manner of writing what you want, your heart should tell you, not me.

Once done, take a small box, insert the paper and bury the box in your garden or wherever there is fresh soil under the light of the full moon. Throwing the box down the gutter or hiding it under some potted plants will NOT be effective.

The digging symbolizes the depth of your need and indicates the willingness to work toward what you wish. If you are a high rise dweller or have no garden to speak of then you have 24 hours to find a place to dig. So no, it doesn't necessarily have to be at your house, but this doesn't mean you should trespass and destroy private or public property either. Be resourceful, not unlawful!

Intermediate wisher: This is not for the faint hearted, and certainly not for those with low self esteem. Prior to the full moon make sure you have a long hot bath or shower. If you know what exfoliate means, do so; if you don't, ask a female or gay member of your household immediately.

If you have no means to exfoliate then a fresh bar of soap will do. The essence is that you have to be as "clean" as possible. Dry off and sit down in a quiet, uncluttered part of your home. Light a white candle (again for purity) and one red (passion). Sit for as many minutes as it takes to clear your mind of angry or negative thoughts.

When you're done walk outside. If you are bold enough (literally) you can do this naked, if you're modest, wear all white. Under the light of the full moon make a wish, you may take the candles with you. When you're done, say a prayer or mantra of thanks and blow out the candles.

Regardless of the outcome, you will feel super charged, and more hopeful about the future. Happy moon wishing!

Concert-hopping Super! season and Ja Rules!

24/7 Nocturnal Navigator

Janine Cuenca-Dario

April 23, Saturday

Make that choice! Where will you be tonight? It's a pretty tough decision today with a diverse range of events. Check out the WWF-Philippines Earth Day festivities at Eastwood City at 8:00 AM. Foreign artists invade our shores with performances tonight by Boyz II Men at the Philsports Arena (formerly Ultra) and recording superstar Ja Rule at the Araneta Coliseum [Araneta Center, Cubao, Quezon City, Phone 9115555, www.ticketnet.com.ph] sending HipHop and RnB fans into funky heaven. House music vocalist Moony ("He's All I Want," "Flying Away") flies in from Italy to perform at the Premiere Cinema THX [Mile Long Arcade, Amorsolo St., Makati City]. Paseo Uno's Lounge [G/F, Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Makati Ave. cor. Paseo de Roxas, Phone 750-8888] is presenting a slide show of Gutsy Tuason's beautiful underwater photography while DJs spin some tracks in "Visual Music."

April 24, Sunday

Earth Day's Jazzfest features the best local jazz artists under one roof at the Power Plant Mall in Rockwell. Performers include Isha, Lyn Sherman, Affinity and—what a surprise—even MMDA Chairman Bayani Fernando. Have a good laugh and catch Repertory Philippines [Phone 887-0710] hilarious comedy "Whose Wife Is It Anyway," at Onstage [2/F Greenbelt 1, Phone 729-7777]. Similarities to well-known sexcapades in Philippine politics will keep you in stitches! ¿Hablan Espanol? No need to flaunt your Hispanic roots to enjoy the last three days of the 1st Asian Nonstop, around-the-clock public reading of the Don Quijote de La Mancha at the Instituto Cervantes [2515 Leon Guinto Corner Estrada Sts., Malate, Phone 526-1482, http://manila.cervantes.es/] where several personalities, intellectuals, Hispanists, Spanish-speaking residents and students from all over Asia participate in the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of this well-loved book by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra.

April 25, Monday

Make Monday your date to watch some popular bands. Freestyle, Davao's pride, will be at the Tavern on the Square [2/L Greenbelt 3, Ayala Center, Phone 757-4484] and Side A goes back to their original home at Calesa Bar, [Hyatt Regency Manila, 2702 Roxas Blvd., Pasay City, Phone 833-1234]. Catch retro band Route 70 at Fiesta San Miguel Dusit Hotel Nikko [EDSA cor. Pasay Road, Ayala Center, Makati, Phone 867-3333] or Cookie Chua's Color It Red at 70's Bistro [46 Anonas Street, Project 2, Quezon City, Phone 434-3597]. Say goodbye to slow Mondays.

April 26, Tuesday

If you still don't know where the young and restless gather on a Tuesday night, you may have been living under a rock. It's time to head on down at Ebony Grooves at V Bar [G/F, Glorietta 2, Ayala Center, Phone 892-8303] featuring Stephen Ku and Johnny Verse. Manila does not run out of band options! Lynn Sherman will perform with Edgar Avenir, Simon Tan, Coco Bermejo at 70's Bistro, Freeverse at Suburbia [1781 M. Adriatico Street, Malate, phone 450-1685/86].

April 27, Wednesday

Make a midweek date with dance music. Start off at Prince of Jaipur to catch House and Lounge tracks at Prince of Jaipur's Ladies Night [Unit E, The Fort 884-1692 to 94] with Wendel Garcia then troop next door to Embassy [The Fort, Phone 816-4195/99] for some RnB and Hip-hop. Don't forget to check out Steve Mills & Aryan at Il Ponticello [121 Valero St., Salcedo Village, Makati, Phone 887-7168] and end the night with Manila's Best House DJ Manolet Dario at V Bar.

April 28, Thursday

Bring out the cinephile in you and check out Remembering Terezin, a film commemorating the children who died in the concentration camp of Terezin, Czechoslovakia during World War II. 7 p.m. at the CCP Little Theater [Roxas Blvd., Pasay City. Call 832-1125 loc. 1702]. While in the area, proceed to Circuit Asia party with DJ Kevin Aviance at the Manila Diamond Hotel.

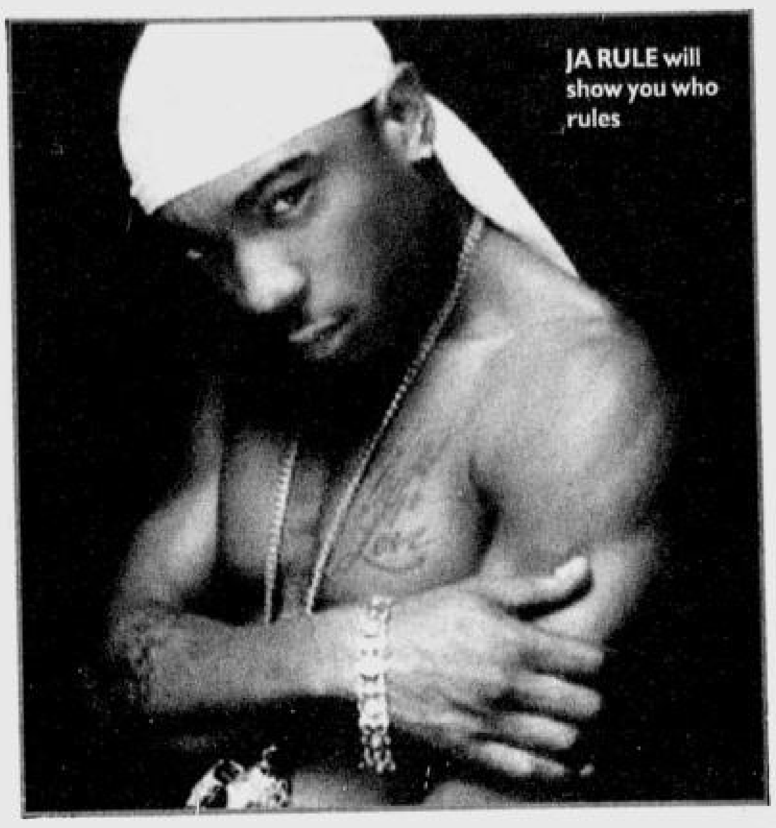
April 29, Friday

Take a break from the hedonistic lifestyle and support EJ Litton's fund-raising project Dance for Life to benefit Bantay-Bata, 6:30 p.m. at the Bellevue Hotel [Filinvest, Alabang Call 886-7869.] Retro bands Spirit of 67, Flintstones and the Gang and 8 Track will ensure being generous will bring on a lot of fun. After that, we owe ourselves all out revelry at Decadance, the city's biggest weekly party with retro DJ Boyet Almazan at Jill's [The Fort Strip, Phone 818-4557] and HouSessions with Manolet Dario at Teak [G/F Power Plant, Lopez Drive, Rockwell Center, Makati, Phone 898-3365].

April 30, Saturday

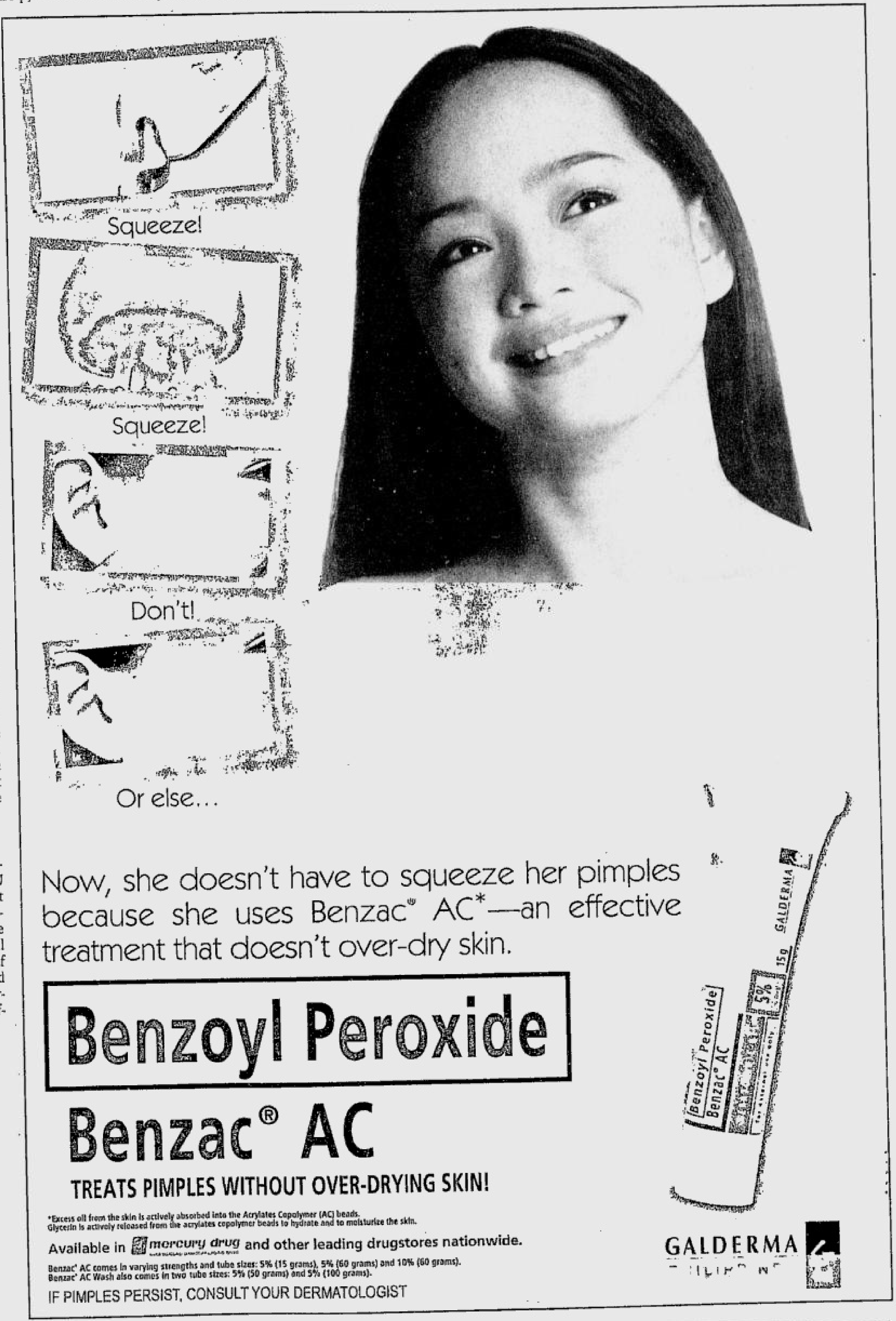
If you're looking for something new and have not explored this part of town, I suggest you watch Radioactive Sago Project, Drip, Brownbeat and Wajihuara at Saguijo [7162 Guijo St., San Antonio Village, Makati].

Schedules may change without prior notice. For more information and a complete listing of events, text 24/7 through your mobile phone and send to 2949 for Globe and 209 for Smart. Win P1 million, Ipod Shuffles weekly and a Peugeot! Log on to www.mag24-7.com or pick up your free copy of 24/7 Nocturnal Navigator at bars and restaurants around the city. Submit your schedules before Wednesday to e-mail address events@mag24-7.com and mag24_7@yahoo.com or fax number 892-0689.



JA RULE will show you who rules

BOYZ II Men: Back in Manila



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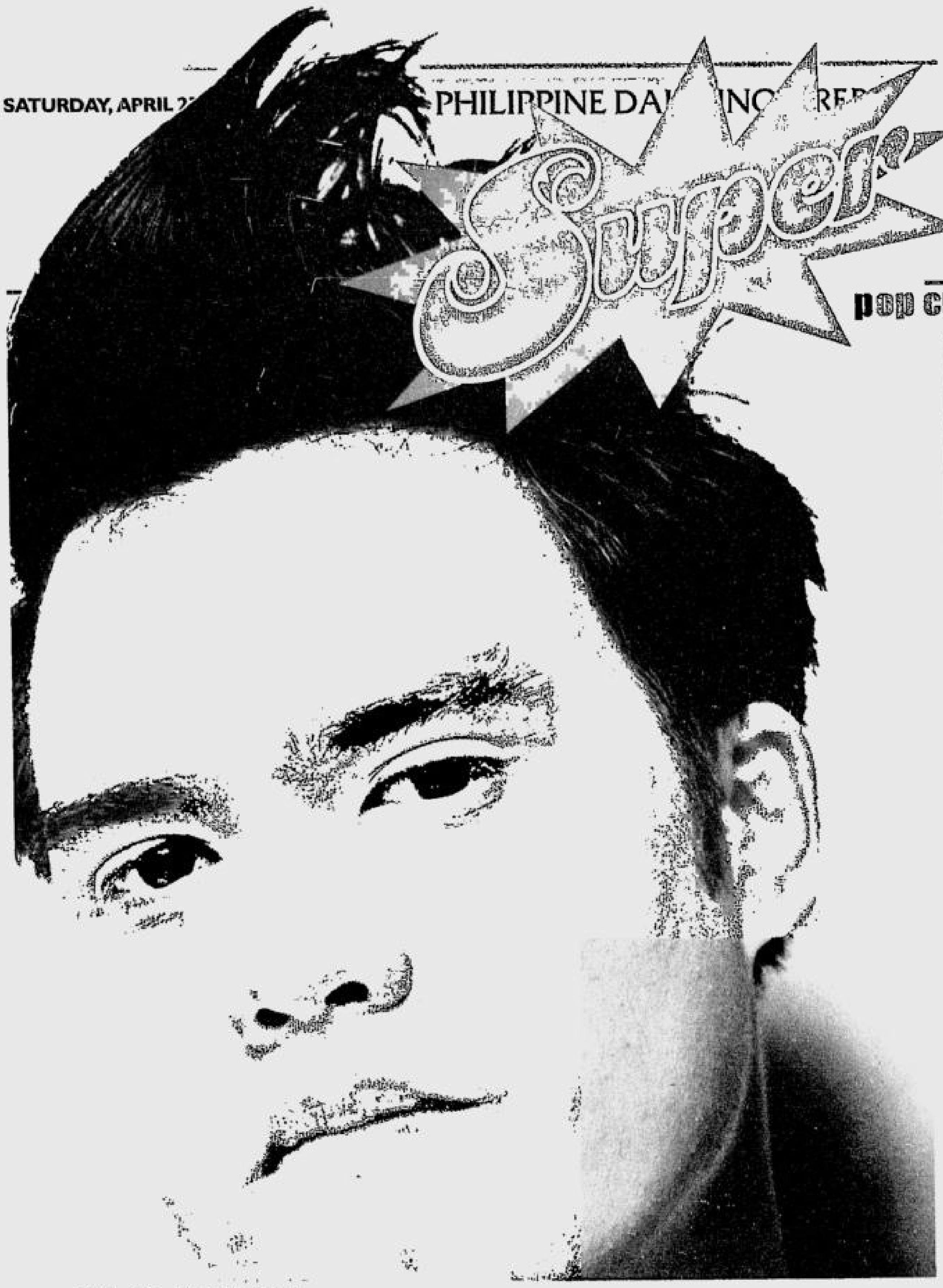

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JAO MAPA

Back on the saddle again

By Wanggo Gallaga
Photos by Emman Montalvan
Styling by Charmaine Palermo
Grooming by Leo Posadas

HAIR RAISER. Jao Mapa is back on the *mapa*

LATE last year, I watched Quark Henares' Palanca winning teleplay turned short film A Date with Jao Mapa and though I found the piece to be whimsical and lightweight, it proved to be powerfully symbolic and prophetic. Written and produced shortly after Jao quit show biz, the short film is about a demented fan who scores a date with her biggest celebrity crush and ends up killing him in the end.

In Jao's case, his fans practically left him for dead when he stepped away from the limelight in 2000, so he could finish school and get a degree.

The similarities to the film and what actually happened makes me smile.

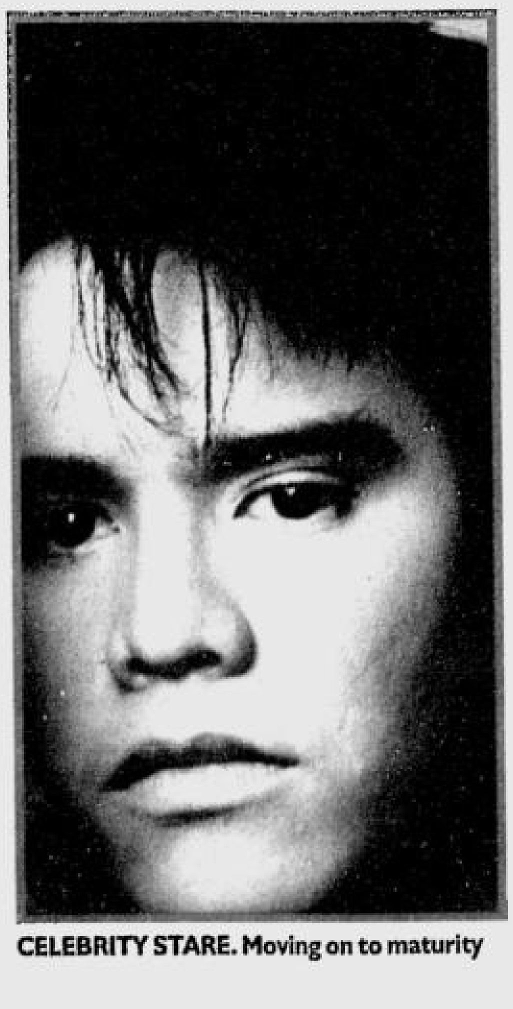
Fast forward to 2005, Jao Mapa is now 28, married with a 2-year-old son. He finished his Fine Arts degree major in Advertising in UST and has worked as a photographer and now paints. And yes, he wants to give acting another shot.

"I've got a good perspective of the industry right now," he says when I asked him about the playing field. This is, after all, the "it" boy of the mid-90s. His face was everywhere—television and film, hosting and acting. He also endorsed Pepsi. He was what Richard Gutierrez is now. And now, he's starting from scratch.

He started his attempt at a comeback late last year. "It's tough. It's hard to get back in," he says. It's been five years since he disappeared from the public eye. His chance to get back was even accidental. An old teacher friend had leukemia and he got into a talk show to seek help for his friend. During the show, he was asked if he wanted to return to show biz. He said "yes."

Without a manager, just calling old friends to help him out, he's been trying to get as many gigs as he can, working slowly to once again become part of show biz. Last year, he had a stint in the Jomari Yllana telenovela

BACK/ D2



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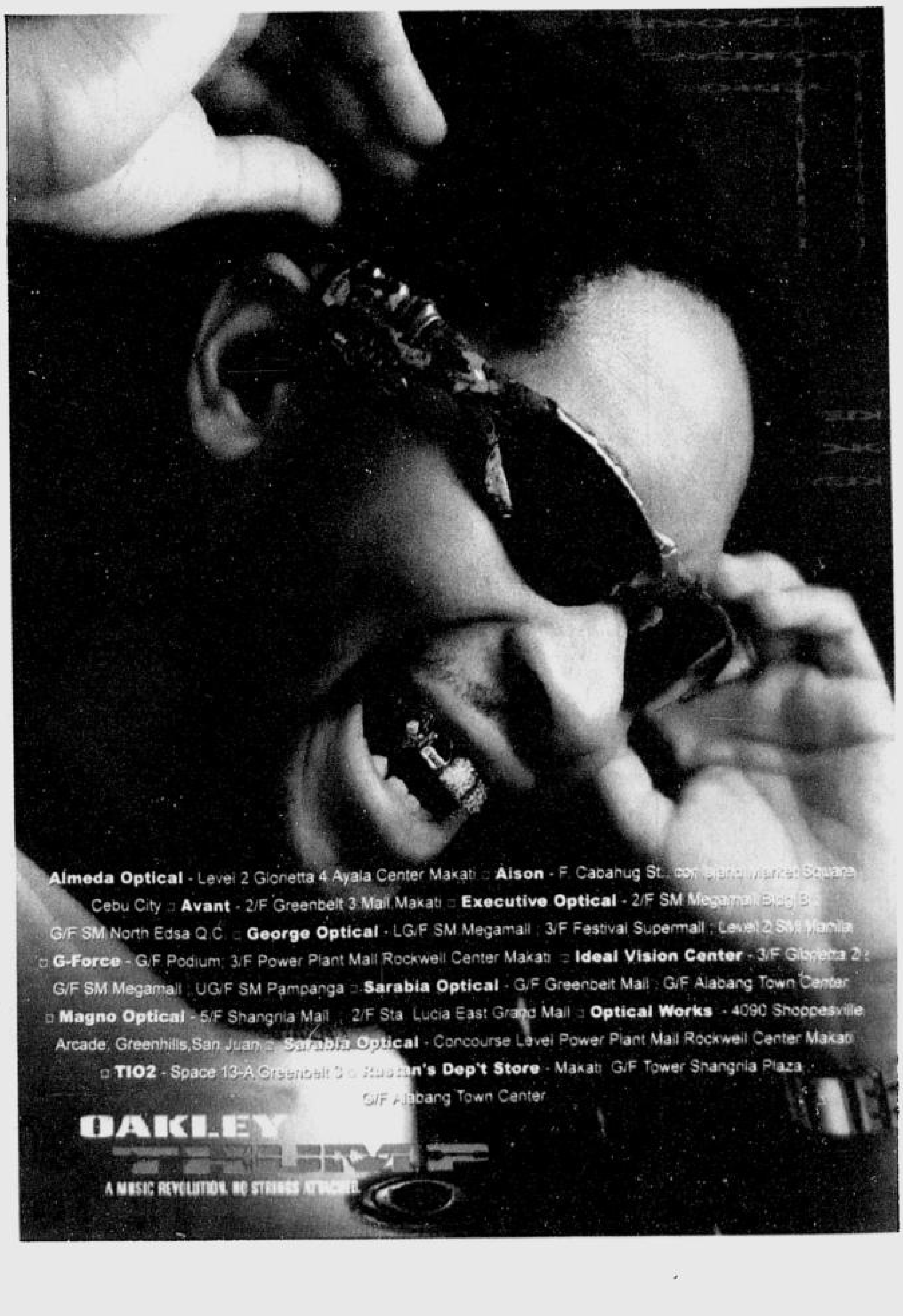
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Hocus bogus!

Age against the machine

Gino de la Paz

WAS LAST week a slow news week or what?

Right before payday, rumors of an intensity 9 earthquake made the rounds and caused a number of naïve Metro Manilans to go batshit insane, albeit for two whole minutes.

According to Inq7.net, "alarmed citizens burned the phone lines" of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) on April 14, "attempting to verify e-mail and text messages that said an earthquake was to hit Metro Manila in the late afternoon."

The "Chicken Little"-type text spam went like this: "Sister Reodica predicted the tsunamis. She is predicting that there will be an intensity 9 earthquake at 5 p.m. April 14, 2005 in Manila. Pls pray hard and pls be in a safe place. Pls pray the rosary." (Note how the time went before the place, a big no-no in English composition, and how this "safe place" went unspecified. Was it Canada? Switzerland? The spaceship in my barn? How useless.)

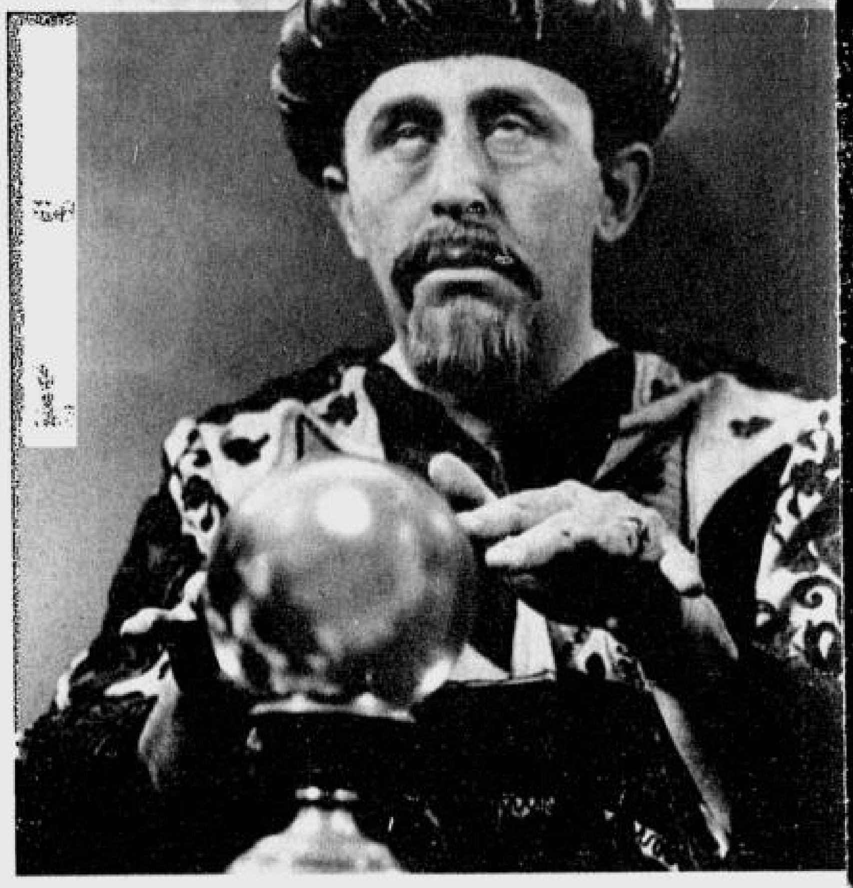
Other versions were conveniently vague as well, saying the earthquake would occur later that day or a few days after April 15. That clause makes this article totally relevant until a PMSing Mother Nature finally shakes Manila and its VIPs down to a pile of rubble and cocaine. Or the end of time, whichever comes first. Talk about an open-ended expiration date. Sigh.

Hoaxbusters

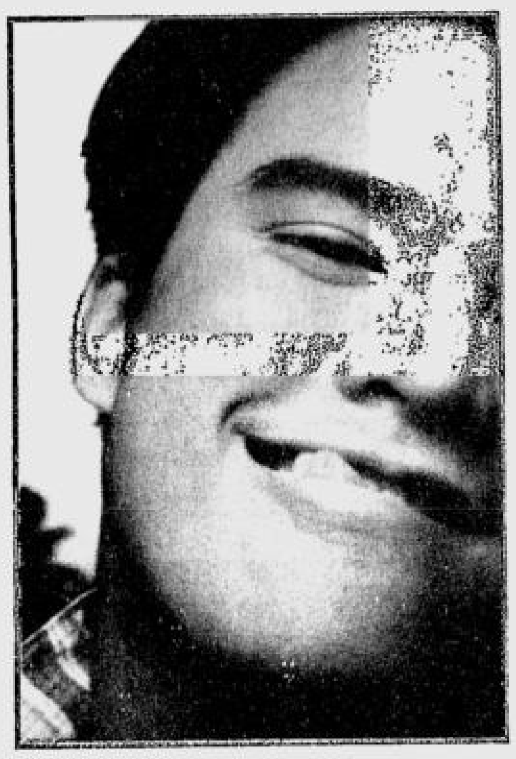
Phivolcs, however, noted that the prediction was from a psychic, referring to the Catholic nun Raquel Reodica, who was reported to have received warnings from a mysterious visionary. Ooh. "The prediction was made by a psychic. There is no scientific basis for that," argued seismology chief Jane Punongbayan. Of course, this "visionary" remains unnamed, leaving the poor nun by her lonesome to endure the public's not-so-subtle snickering and frustration.

"There has been no ground deformation, no indication at all that there will be an earthquake with that intensity," Punongbayan told the INQUIRER News Service. In its website, Phivolcs even insisted that it has never issued any earthquake predictions because "there is no technology in the whole world, even in highly developed countries [like Japan]," that can predict such seismic activity. "I cannot tell psychics not to make predictions ... But I hope they have better and correct predictions next time, so they will not cause panic," the Phivolcs official added.

But through the miracle called astute PR, Sister Raquel has already prepared a disclaimer. If the dire prediction did not come to pass, she told journalist Ma. Ceres P. Doyo, she



HE STILL HAS IT. Up for more challenging roles



Back on the saddle again

From page D1

Hawak Ko ang Langit where he played a supporting role to Assunta de Rossi.

Then he got to play a cop (a role he never got to play before) in Nginig with Mark Fernandez, Kaya Ko 'To and Y Speak. But the world of show biz is not kind to its former idols. The reality shows on television that churn out new stars have made competition tougher and so much younger.

But Jao is unfazed, and says he has to think of new ways to sell himself. "I'm a brand new package," he says, "more mature and I'm up for more challenging roles."

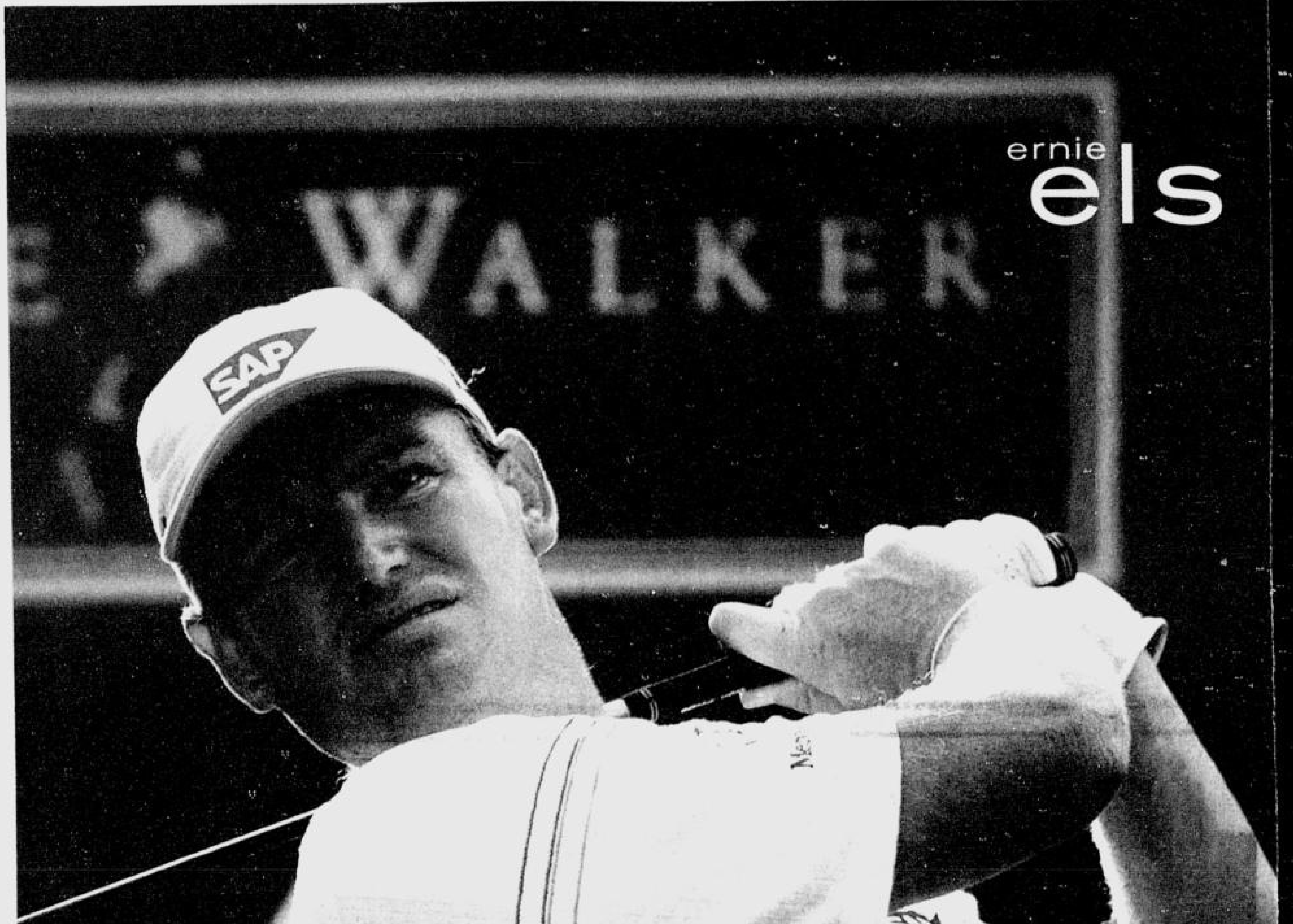
Jao says he has no regrets leaving show biz in 2000. "I was looking for some reality in my life," he states, "It came to the point that I was asking is this how life is? That people know you and you get all these good stuff?" He was, after all the biggest teen celebrity of his time. "I guess," he adds, "I wanted to get down from that horse and feel the ground. I got pretty more in touch with life. Lived the life of a simple man."

"There's no turning back (from the decision), it's what I love," when I ask him if he's scared about trying and failing. "I have the passion for acting. If I had it before, I still have it now and I'd like to put it to good use *pa rin*."

He's ready to do everything, start from the bottom and work his way back to the top. He says he wants to work with new directors, with new actors, be a part of the growing independent movement and explore the digital revolution of cinema.

This is no longer an interview but Jao Mapa's declaration that he had been on that white horse once, where everyone can see him. He stepped down out of his own free will and he's going to get back on the saddle again.

He did it once. He seems confident and determined he could do it again.



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Drink Moderately

is ready to face humiliation and be called a charlatan. Since 5 p.m. did pass and Phivolcs did not register a tremor — yay! — I'd like to happily suggest a career move to brighten her spirits. A guest stint on "The Buzz" perhaps? To talk about a phony catfight with co-psychic Madam Auring? Involving a sex scandal? Okay I need to take a nap now before I get into more trouble with God's sidekicks. Yikes.

A somewhat brief reenactment

Moving on, I'm really not the type who believes in high-decibel hearsay, especially doomsday delusions dispatched via technology. Or am I? To see if I'm a gullible guy or not, here's a somewhat brief reenactment of my reaction that fateful Thursday.

2:03 p.m.: "Just got up. Major dog breath. Anyway, time to check my e-mail. Holy crap! A shitload of new e-mails! For sure they can't all be spam. That's impossible! Let's click on this first one to find out."

2:04 p.m.: "SHUT. UP. Someone hacked into my Bank of America account! To recover my money, they want me to reconfirm my bank details and give out my social security number, credit card expiration date, ATM PIN and my first-born's left kidney! DONE! Funny though coz I don't recall ever having an account with Bank of America. But I do now, SUCKAS!"

2:06 p.m.: "251 invitations to join Ringo? That's odd coz I don't have any friends! This must be my lucky day. *Sweeeeeeet.*"

3:45 p.m.: "My right wrist hurts. I hope it's because I jerk off too much to Internet porn and not carpal tunnel. Oops, overshare! But I'm only talking to myself so who the hell cares? Wait, what's this? EARTHQUAKE? AT 5 P.M.? TODAY? It's been forwarded to at least a hundred people so it must be true! Hot dang, I must call my friends and family about this, like, superhero fast!"

3:46 p.m.: "Bathroom break!"

3:51 p.m.: "Oh. My. God. There's a deluge of messages on my phone! Okay, seven. But I digress. Sister Reodica again? Earthquake? PRAY THE ROSARY??? Dude, if the world's gonna end, I'm not gonna spend it praying! Meh, I'm gonna PARTY. I'm gonna have sex in a nuclear bunker. I'm gonna swan dive into a pool of San Miguel beer. I'm gonna hurl myself into outer space on Richard Branson's spaceship and eat floating potato chips one at a time like Homer Simpson. I'm gonna…"

4:32 p.m.: "Hey, 'American Idol' is on. Don't mind if I do!"

4:42 p.m.: "Scott Sable is, like, a fatty."

4:49 p.m.: "Saying that you're having a 'quarter-life crisis' can get you tons of Valium from a licensed psychologist. Score! See, your twenties aren't so bad."

4:52 p.m.: "8 minutes till the earthquake! Crap. I really wanna know who'll get voted off today!"

4:59 p.m.: "Crap. It's Nadia Turner. Crap crap crap!"

5:00 p.m.: "AHHHHH! Run for cover!!!"

5:03 p.m.: "Run for cover?"

5:09 p.m.: "Hello? Earthquake, are you there? Just to be sure, I'll use my Care Bear stare. Take that, you nasty earthquake!"

5:15 p.m.: "Yo, it took me fifteen minutes to decide to scratch my ass."

5:16 p.m.: "High fives all around! My Care Bear stare just saved Metro Manila! (Pause.) Or I've just been 'Punk'd' by a nun who thinks she's Joan of Arcadia! Curses! I must reward her handsomely for this hoax by sending her a tastefully worded e-mail along with a poisoned fruit basket. After all, she put pictures of death and destruction in my mind that I don't need to see! I really don't wanna know when I'm gonna go, you know. This is so, like, the Y2K scare. Where's that sucker now, HUH?"

5:17 p.m.: "*Aaaaaaand* cut. I'm over it."

TIME
PANIC
DONT
PANIC
THE END OF THE WORLD!?!
Y2K Insanity! Apocalypse Now! Will computers melt down? Will society? A guide to
MILLENNIUM MADNESS

Fwd: Fwd: Fwd: Re: Paranoia will destroy ya

IS IT the end of the world or is Britney Spears just preggers with Kevin Federline's fetus? Same difference, I know. But how can you tell if you're being conned, duped or emotionally blackmailed into thinking that it's really the apocalypse at your doorstep? Here are seven signs that pranksters are indeed starting their engines.

1 Con artists come in the form of fortune tellers, psychic healers and tarot card readers. Notice how they're easy to dispense ambiguous prophecies such as a natural disaster striking "within the year," a famous person "dying" or you'll have "children" in the future. However, they can't seem to predict really specific stuff, like your Accounting midterm grade or whether your next date will give you herpes or not. Like, duh.

2 Whether it's an SMS or e-mail, keep your eyes peeled for the telltale phrases, "Forward this to everyone you know!" or "Ignore this and something bad will happen to you, like your deodorant will let you down!" The more urgent the plea, the more it's bound to be bull.

3 Doom and gloom propagandists often use disclaimers like "This is NOT a hoax" or "This is NOT a chain e-mail." Since it's normally the opposite of what they mean, I wonder what they think of "This is NOT my middle finger?"

4 As subtle as a drive-by shooting, hoaxers also love using overly emphatic language, UPPERCASE LETTERS and multiple exclamation points!!!!!! This article is an exception, though, since it was blessed by the Dalai Lama, who is my copy editor.

5 High-tech scams don't typically mention verifiable information. Virtually any chain e-mail/SMS you receive is more likely to be false than true. As you would Ashlee Simpson's talent, you should also be automatically skeptical of chain messages. When in doubt, doublecheck urban-legend-busting sites like Snopes.com. Sadly, blogs don't count.

6 In ways we can scarcely understand, animals are in a better position than humans to predict natural disasters. Most of the time, they have better track records than nuns.

7 Speaking of which, in this age of forensics, be wary of religion-oriented tricksters, especially those who claim to have seen the face of Christ on a chocolate chip cookie or statues weeping tears of blood that look suspiciously like lacquer. Since Catholicism is still pretty medieval—I mean, they figure out important things by reading smoke signals—take their exhortations very lightly. Like you would a talking headless monkey. Or Simon Cowell. Whatever.

The end of the world doesn't have to be a special-effects Jerry Bruckheimer-style spectacular. If truth be told, a slow death—by smoking, binge-drinking, eating fried Mars bars, or watching local TV—is strangely not considered serious even though in certain ways it's more painful than death by natural calamity.

You see, it's one thing for doomsday prophets to foretell the end of days. It's another for them to actually wish it to happen. We should first discern the motives behind these evil forecasts before jumping to any conclusions, like moving your family to La Union. Then again, you can simply delete the annoying message, right?

More than that, though, whether these psychic predictions are hokey or not, do you really wanna know when your life ends? Like, exactly when? I don't. Most people say it's better to be safe than sorry. Personally, I'd rather live my life as an optimistic fool than an anxious worrywart. So there.

Don't miss the tee-off.

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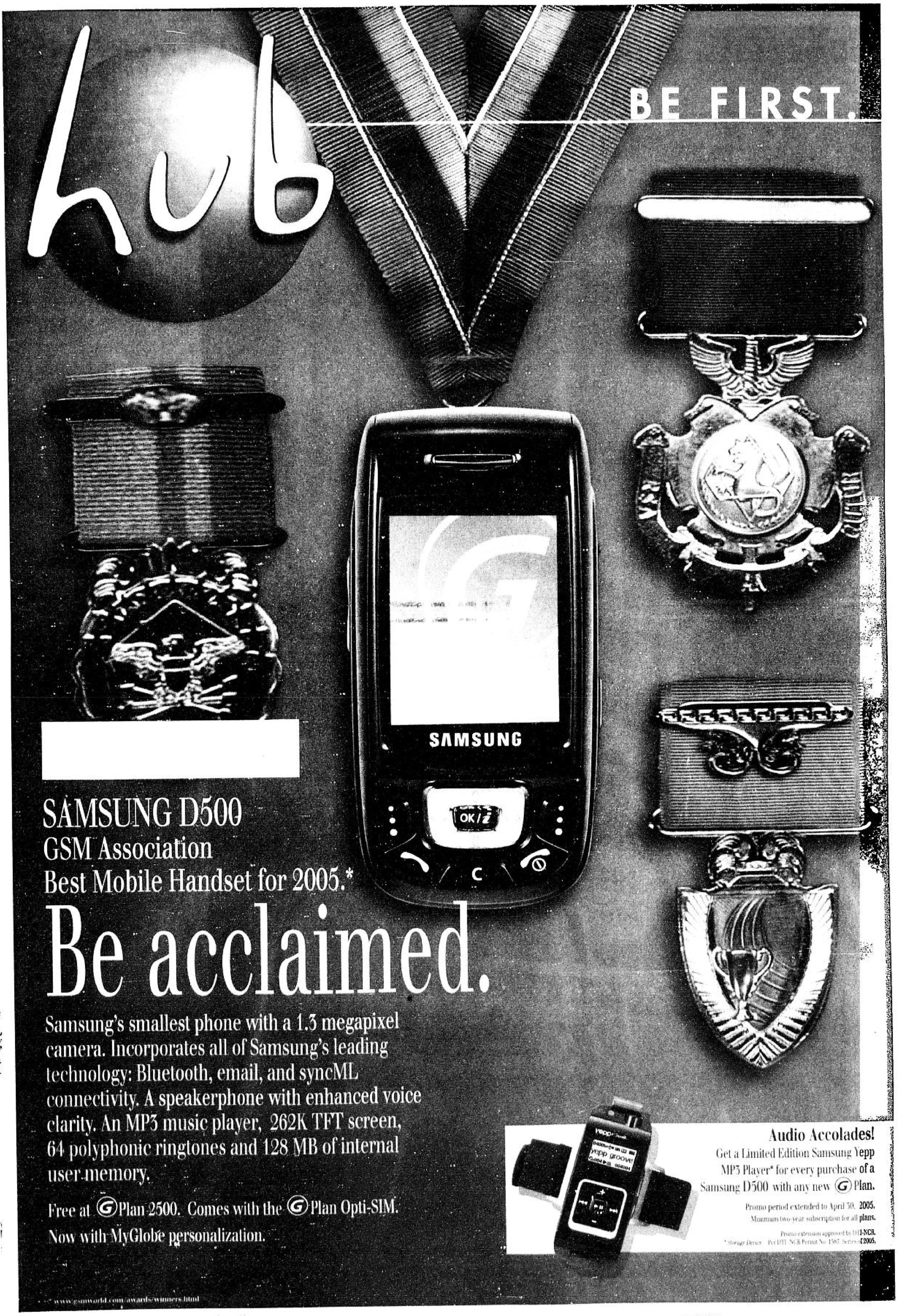
PHILIP NE Super IRER

Hocus bogus!

Or what I think of random earthquake predictions by so-called psychic nuns

STORY ON PAGE D2



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* Storage Device Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 1587 Series of 2005.

* www.gsmworld.com/awards/winners.html

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SAMSUNG Globe HANDYPHONE

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Text us your feedback: inquirer sup name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

PUMP IT UP: Carlos Concepcion and Rexcy Mino

BACK TO BACK: Joseph Salomon and Ashley Spencer

Tim Yap

Styling by Noel Manapat
Hair and make up by Vivere Salon
Location: Hey Jude Resort Hotel, Boracay

Wearing my bikini in bed

Photos by Ronnie Salvacion

I CAN'T get no sleep. One week to go before the Mossimo Bikini Summit, less than one month to go before Jeffrey Jeturian's Bikini Open movie. The first one a live flesh parade, the latter a "mockumentary" of bikini contests (we shall devote a whole Super! issue on this film—watch out for it.)

As you can see, summer's buzz word is "bikini." And no other event sizzles more than the Mossimo Bikini Summit '05—a most awaited event among the peeps who love to stare at their bulging biceps at Gold's Gym.

Sweet 16 guys and gals are vying for the big plum at the Big Dome. "After three years of staging it in Boracay, we thought it was about time that people get the chance to see it live," whispered Calvin (not Klein, oops!) Neria and Duds Santiago of Cast & Crew, the event's producers.

Among the alumni of this competition are Brent Javier, Carlo Maceda, DJ Myke of Akafellas, Marco Grazzini and Thea Kriegl. Here's hoping for more memorable female candidates this year.

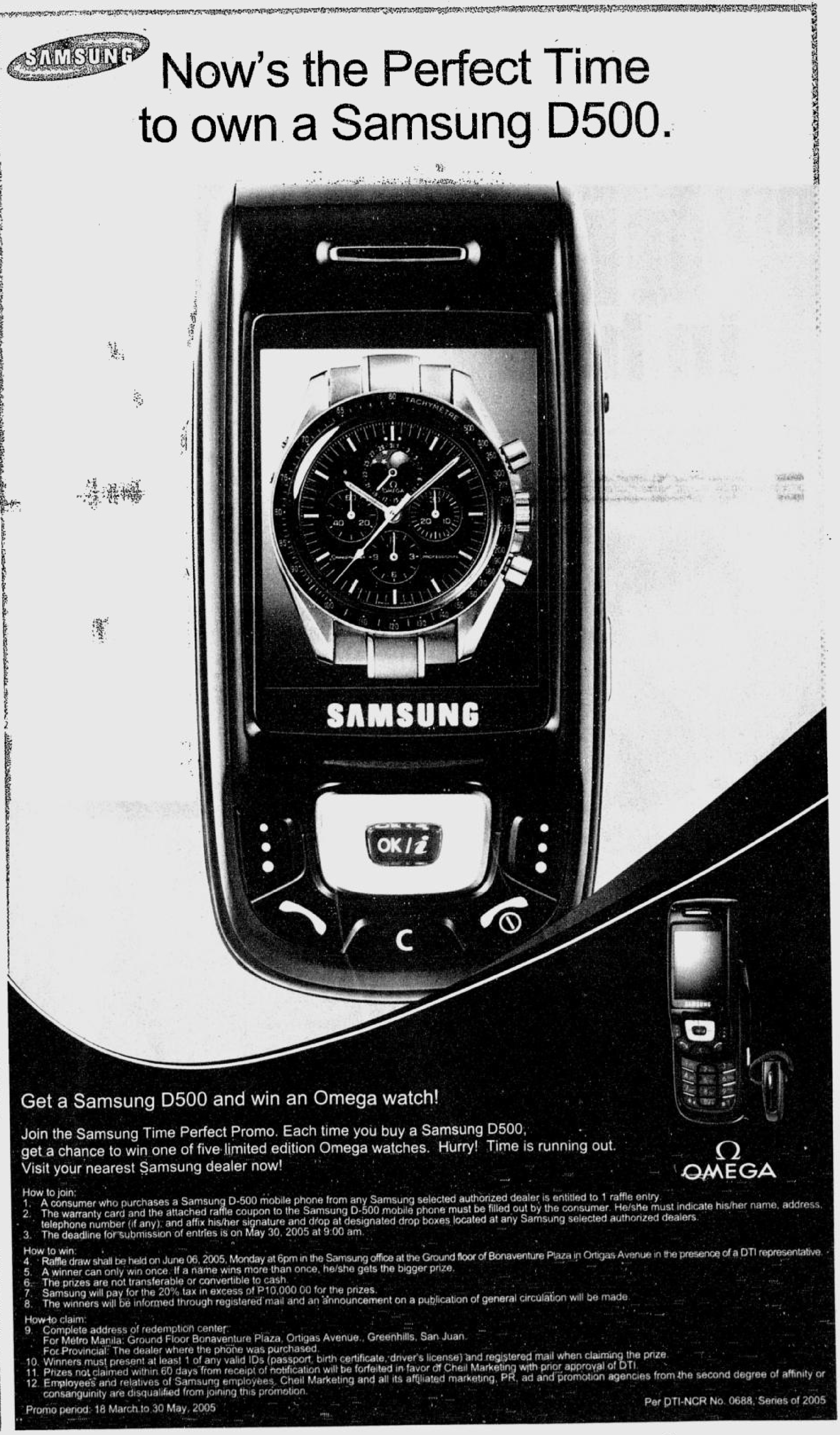
If I were an underwear

This whole obsession with fitness is so in-

WEARING/ E2

PEARLS OF THE ORIENT [illegible] and Harley Ng

ROCK HARD [illegible]



Now's the Perfect Time to own a Samsung D500.

Get a Samsung D500 and win an Omega watch!

Join the Samsung Time Perfect Promo. Each time you buy a Samsung D500, get a chance to win one of five limited edition Omega watches. Hurry! Time is running out. Visit your nearest Samsung dealer now!

How to join:
1. A consumer who purchases a Samsung D-500 mobile phone from any Samsung selected authorized dealer is entitled to 1 raffle entry.
2. The warranty card and the attached raffle coupon to the Samsung D-500 mobile phone must be filled out by the consumer. He/she must indicate his/her name, address, telephone number (if any); and affix his/her signature and drop at designated drop boxes located at any Samsung selected authorized dealers.
3. The deadline for submission of entries is on May 30, 2005 at 9:00 am.

How to win:
4. Raffle draw shall be held on June 06, 2005, Monday at 6pm in the Samsung office at the Ground floor of Bonaventure Plaza in Ortigas Avenue in the presence of a DTI representative.
5. A winner can only win once. If a name wins more than once, he/she gets the bigger prize.
6. The prizes are not transferable or convertible to cash.
7. Samsung will pay for the 20% tax in excess of P10,000.00 for the prizes.
8. The winners will be informed through registered mail and an announcement on a publication of general circulation will be made.

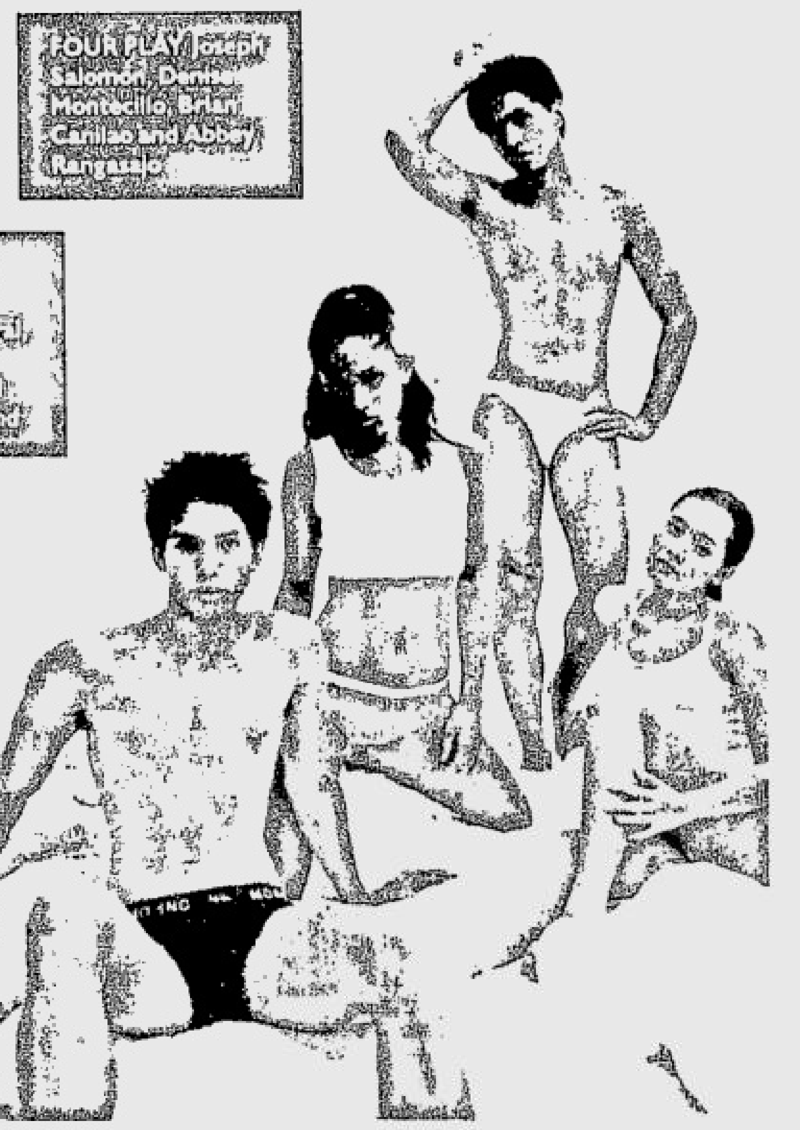
How to claim:
9. Complete address of redemption center:
For Metro Manila: Ground Floor Bonaventure Plaza, Ortigas Avenue., Greenhills, San Juan.
For Provincial: The dealer where the phone was purchased.
10. Winners must present at least 1 of any valid IDs (passport, birth certificate, driver's license) and registered mail when claiming the prize.
11. Prizes not claimed within 60 days from receipt of notification will be forfeited in favor of Cheil Marketing with prior approval of DTI.
12. Employees and relatives of Samsung employees, Cheil Marketing and all its affiliated marketing, PR, ad and promotion agencies from the second degree of affinity or consanguinity are disqualified from joining this promotion.

Promo period: 18 March to 30 May, 2005

Per DTI-NCR No. 0688, Series of 2005

THREE TIMES THE FUN: Khai Lim, Ashley and Donald Tan

MADE FOR PLEASURE: Mariam Corral, Handrew Maxilom and Kevin Haaland



FOUR PLAY: Joseph Salomon, Denise Montecillo, Brian Canilao and Abbey Rangasajo

Wearing my bikini in bed

HAWAIIAN PUNCH: Ericka Fontanilla, Jane Tuazon and Weila Khonghun

From page E1

dicative of our times now. A decade ago, gyms were as non-existent as Tom Babauta's career today. As we once predicted here in Super!—exercise is indeed the new ecstasy.

Now if I were a Mossimo underwear, I wouldn't know what to do—for my main job is to provide comfort and support to my boss' belongings. I need to keep them warm and fend off any elements that may cause itching.

In bed, I will hug closely and will only leave my master's side when he or she wishes to. And when I'm on the sidelines, I watch closely the action that transpires because I am instrumental to this climax.

Pow! Enough fantasizing—just save your seat (if you can hold on to it) and enjoy the meat at the Araneta Coliseum next Saturday for this battle of the bodies.

Everyone must come.

Who do you think has "it"? Email me at supertim@pldtdsl.net

BABES AND BOYS

THIS year's batch, the biggest in the contest's four-year history, is led by male finalists Einar Ingebrigsten, Joseph Salomon, Mico Areglado, Carlos Concepcion, Erl Neeman, Kevin Haaland, Ramon del Prado, Brian Canilao, Benj Capay, Martin Jickain, Paul Tumulak, Harly Ng, Joshua Ylaya, Donald Tan, Handrew Maxilom and Kerwin Yap.

Female finalists are Kathleen Deen, Ericka Fontanilla, Rexcy Mino, Ashley Spencer, Jouella Khonghun, Denise Montecillo, Jane Tuazon, Lara Monterola, Abbey Rangasajo, Jeff Gaitan, Liz Camering, Tricia Intong, Khai Lim, Jasmine Maierhofer, Anna Rose Jebb, and Mariam Corral.

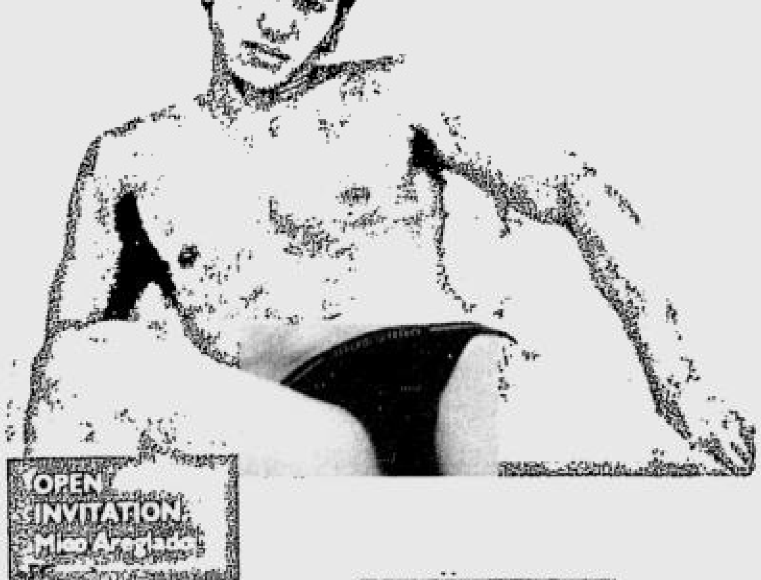
To mark this special occasion, Cast & Crew tapped some of the music industry's biggest names to provide the entertainment. More than 15 of today's top artists will perform, including Grace Nono, Ella May Saison, Kitchie Nadal, Jett Pangan, Luke Mejares, Jimmy Bondoc, Pido, DJ Myke of the Akafellas (who was a runner-up in MBS '04), Sun Valley Crew, all male percussion group Royal Rhythm Force, fast-rising band Velcro, violinists Jerome Nuñez and Victoria Regalarion, opera singer Rachel Gerodias, Whiplash and singing champions Frenchie Dy and Rachelle Ann Go.

Vote for your favorite candidates by texting MBS to 2995 (for Smart subscribers only). The male and female candidates with the highest number of text votes will automatically qualify in the Top 6 Semi-Finalists.

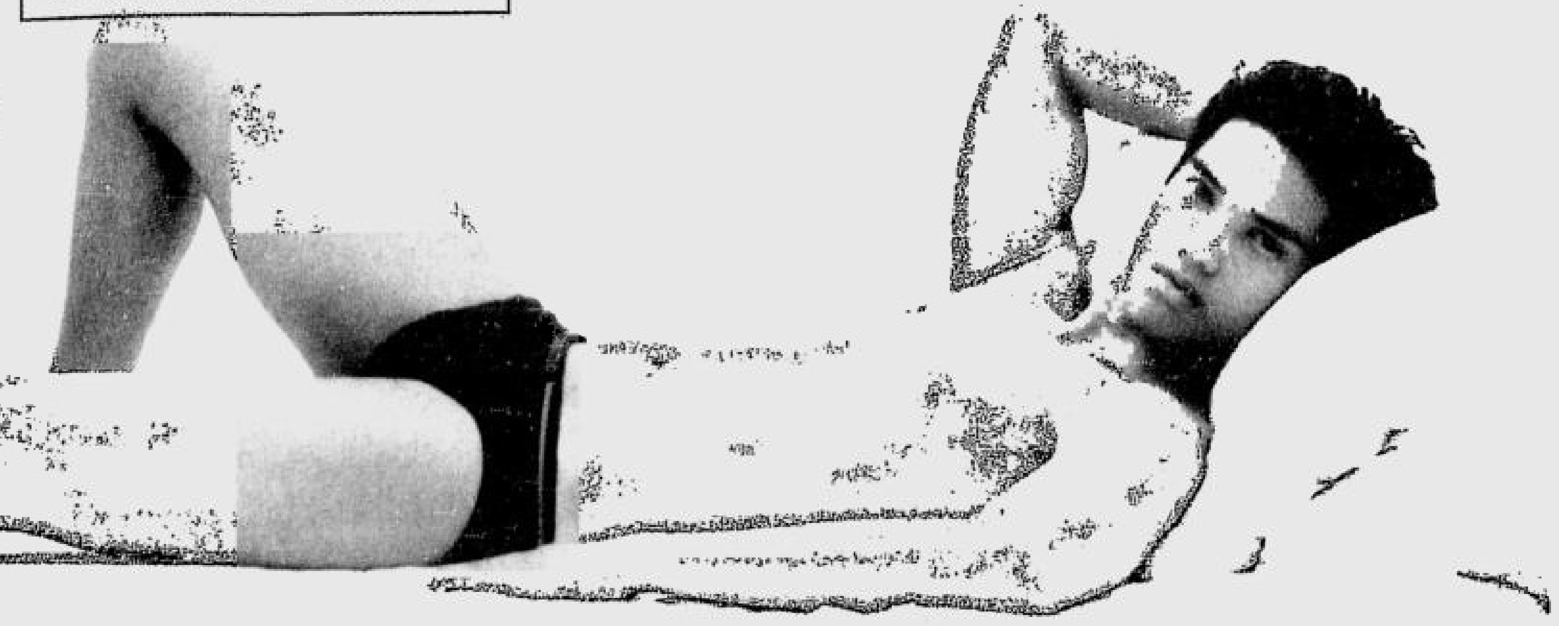
You can get your tickets to this grand summer event at any SM Ticketnet outlets or at the Araneta Coliseum Box Office or call 911-5555 and 910-0158. **David Milan**

LET'S GO TO BED: With Jon Kevin and Ericka!

TAKE IT ALL OFF: Jeff Gaitan, Benj Capay, Abbey and Erl Neeman



OPEN INVITATION: Mico Areglado



PUSH ME HARD: Paul Tumulak is waiting for you

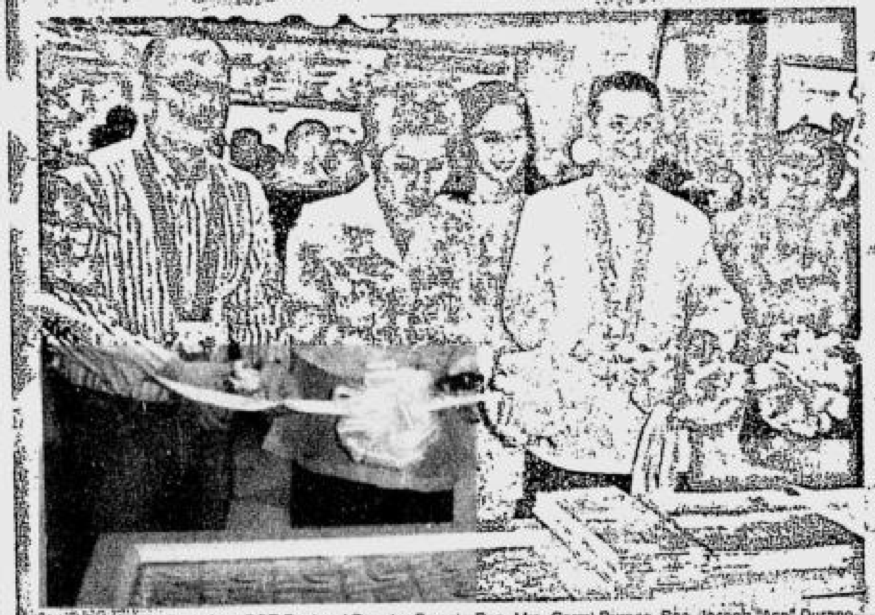
A Must-Have Card:

SMART and the Department of Tourism Present the Biyahe Na! Card

(L-R) Jollibee, Dong Cruz, DOT Regional Director Dawnie Roa, Cebu Provincial Board Member Agnes Magpale, Talisay Councilor Shirley Belleza DOT Secretary Joseph "Ace" Durano, SM Senior AVP for Marketing Communications Marissa Fernan, Jollibee Marketing Services Officer for Vismin Nelson Judaya, Mandaue Councilor Wenceslao Gakit, PAL AVP for Visayas Sales Mr. Bob Salazar, SMART Communications Inc. Product Marketing Manager Ricky Isla

The Biyahe Na! Card

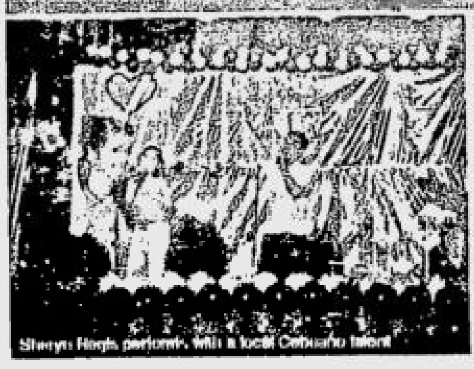
I ♥ PHILIPPINES
Biyahe Na!
SMART
WOWPHILIPPINES



(L-R) SMART's Ricky Isla, DOT Regional Director Dawnie Roa, Mrs. Carmi Durano, Sec. Joseph "Ace" Durano, Cebu Provincial Board Member Agnes Magpale cut the ceremonial ribbon at the launch of Biyahe Na! Card in SM Cebu

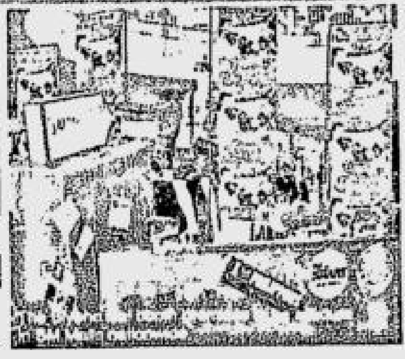
Batangueños show off their Biyahe Na! Card

SM
ENTERTAINMENT



Sheryn Regis performs with a local Cebuano talent

Bamboo rocks in SM Cebu!



Dancing [illegible] Tinikling

Biyahe Na! Card

In the heat of summer, one tends to dream of traveling. Whether it be to beaches with pristine white sand, out-of-town locales featuring colorful fiestas, or a simple resort that offers relaxation, getting out of one's routine can be a refreshing break. SMART Communications, Inc. and the Department of Tourism (DOT) led by Sec. Joseph "Ace" Durano have recently joined forces to make your travel experience around the country more fun and productive.

The Biyahe Na! Card, the official travel card of the DOT, is geared toward boosting tourism in the Philippines. By showcasing the beauty of the archipelago, the card also offers perks and privileges to cardholders. Launched via a vibrant event at the SM North EDSA on April 3, the Biyahe Na! Card was also launched in SM Cebu, SM Baguio, SM Pampanga, SM Cagayan de Oro, SM Manduriao, and SM Batangas. The Biyahe Na! Booths are currently in all SM Malls nationwide, and will serve as the primary outlets for the Biyahe Na! Cards to be retrieved.

With a Biyahe Na! Card, you can enjoy fantastic discounts from SMART's major partners in this enterprise. The partners are SM, Jollibee, Shell, Philippine Airlines, and Biyaheng Gimik travel partners. Other popular establishments are also offering freebies through this promo. These include Watsons, Toy Kingdom, and Baby Co.

Sounds intriguing? You can avail of the Biyahe Na! Card at all SMART Wireless Centers or Biyahe Na! Booths in SM Malls nationwide. There are four ways of getting a card. Purchase a SMART Prepaid phonekit plus ₱30 e-load. Another way of getting the Biyahe Na! Card is by purchasing a SMART Prepaid SIM plus ₱30 of e-load. You can also SIM-swap your non-SMART SIM, then e-load ₱60 to automatically get the card. The fourth option is for existing SMART subscribers to just download ₱30 worth of Biyahe Na! content. Once you get the Biyahe Na! Card, you can enjoy all the privileges that come with it!

You can show off your national pride by displaying different logos, picture messages, and wallpapers on your phone featuring our breathtaking attractions. You can even subscribe to Biyahe Na! downloads to get daily and weekly content exclusive to SMART. Text LUV to 555 for a menu of Biyahe Na! services offered.

This summer, make your vacation memorable and meaningful. Take a trip to explore our beautiful land. The Biyahe Na! Card is SMART's gift to both travel buffs and Filipinos who wish to experience the richness that is the Philippines. There are over 7,100 islands for you to visit, so get that Biyahe Na! Card and get started today!

"The Biyahe Na! Card makes travelling more fun. As you explore the beauty of the Philippines, you also enjoy cool perks and discounts."
- Sec. Joseph "Ace" Durano

I ♥ PHILIPPINES

Biyahe Na!

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0976, Series of 2005.

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style . urban living . pop culture . entertainment . recreation

Master mind

Meditating for almost 12 hours each day was not a walk in the park

Beyond the runway

Raya Manaquil

MODELS are supposed to be cool, freakishly tall and abnormally skinny. I am all of the above—except for the cool part. If the fashion world was like a high school and there were cliques, I would be the dorky girl eager to discuss the philosophies of Buddha with my equally geeky boyfriend on a Saturday night, while the populars hit Buddha Bar.

Last Holy Week, all the beautiful people headed to Boracay for a holiday of sea, sun and skin. Corey and I decided to go on a different journey. With no cellphones, no luxuries and no entertainment, we took a 10-day meditation course at a farm in Cavite.

When I first heard about the Vipassana Meditation course, I had this eagerness as I have always had this exigency to go beyond myself. As a yogini, I knew that this would help me walk the path towards Self-realization and Enlightenment.

Upon application, I read all the information, schedule and guidelines. For the next 10 days, we were to meditate for almost 12 hours, starting at 4:30 a.m. We were not allowed to speak to or communicate with any of our co-meditators. We were not allowed to bring books, magazines, iPods, or any form of distraction.

Princess of telebabad

On the day of our departure, my mom bid Corey and I farewell. "Good luck in Crazyland! Don't lose your sanity!" she joked.

Let me tell you that it was the longest 10 days of my life.

Every morning at 4 a.m., we would awaken to the sound of a gong-like bell. As my half-opened eyes looked out the window at the still-dark skies on the first day, I was tempted to go back to dreamland. But when I heard the repeated crows of a neighboring rooster, it was impossible to get back to sleep. Argh! That rooster is lucky that I'm an animal rights advocate.

Throughout the course, we observed what is called Noble Silence. Since we were not allowed to talk to anyone, it almost felt like you were alone. If my mom was the "Queen of Telebabad" at home, I would be the Princess. Initially I had sporadic feelings of loneliness and insanity, but as the days went, I found a sense of peace.

Meditating for almost 12 hours each day was not a walk in the park. It was not easy to sit down, be still, and close your eyes for long periods of time. But this is how Gotama Buddha reached Enlightenment. "Life is suffering," Buddha taught.

In the non-sectarian technique of Vipassana, you will learn at an experiential level how to free yourself from misery and attain highest happiness. It is said that misery is rooted from an attachment—to a person, a place, a feeling, an object, anything.

Purify the mind

We become miserable when we constantly crave for these because we do not realize that these are all impermanent; they will come and go. If we train our mind to simply observe our bodily sensations, we will eventually become equanimous to pleasant and unpleasant sensations.

Many alcoholics, drug addicts, temperamental people have greatly benefited from this simply because they have learned to purify the mind, and have become their own master. But for those who do not have any serious vices or profligacies, Vipassana will help you lead an even happier, loving and compassionate life.

For those who have been victims of abuse, have suffered heartbreaks, or experienced a great loss in their lives, Vipassana will teach you how to overcome these feelings of pain and sorrow.

Change is the law of nature. You will find a high state of happiness from within—the kind that you cannot get from money, fame, or even from your loved ones. Why? Because all these are temporary.

I have read some Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, and I have come to understand merely at an intellectual level how attachment is the source of all our misery. But this meditation course has allowed me to actually understand this at an experiential level. In the words of the teacher S.N. Goenka, "You create your own wisdom through your own personal experiences."

Many returned from their holy week vacation with a golden tan, but I returned to my home with a golden mind. While I am certainly no guru, the 10-day experience has provided me a step to reach a higher level of metanoia. It is the continuing practice of Vipassana that will lead you to bliss.

* * *

Master your mind and walk on the path to happiness by joining the 10-day course on May 11-22 at the Sico Farm in Dasmariñas, Cavite. For inquiries, call 8231418, 5234842, 6326506 or text 0920-4656480, 0917-8971903, 0916-9708578, or email vipassana_rp@yahoo.com. For more information about Vipassana Meditation, check out www.dhamma.org

By tradition, Vipassana meditation courses are supported solely by voluntary donations. Neither the teachers nor the organizers receive any remuneration for their services.

Email the author at eatyourtofu@yahoo.com

SUPER! SELECTIONS

Faster than you can say banana mango shake

By Pam Pastor

IT'S SOUTHEAST Asian Airline's (SEAIR) tenth birthday but we're the ones getting the gifts.

Tonight, they will launch the Dornier 328, one of the fastest aircrafts of its kind in the world. This little baby can take you to Boracay in just 35 minutes. Yes, you read it right, 35 minutes. Just about the amount time you spend watching American Idol's results show.

They'll also launch the adventure pass that would give you 45 days of unlimited flying to any of SEAIR's destinations. That means you can fly to any of the following places—Basco, Busuanga, Camiguin, Caticlan, Cebu, Clark, Cotabato, Cuyo, El Nido, Jolo, Manila, Puerto Princesa, San Jose, Siargao, Tawi Tawi, Taytay, Zamboanga—every day for 45 days if you want to. Doesn't that awaken the travel bug in you?

We love it. Love it love it love it.

For inquiries, visit www.flyseair.com or call 843-7308.

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MECHANICS:
1. Buy 24 skeins of any DMC threads.
2. Submit twenty four (24) pieces of DMC skein bands with the DMC logo (not the one with barcode) to any of the selected redemption outlets nationwide.

Give this skein band

3. Write your name, address, telephone number and signature on the registration sheet at the redemption center.

The Wonderful World of Cross-Stitch Instructional Video CD contains a step by step guide and instructions on how to cross-stitch. This is accompanied by a "Rose" cross-stitch pattern printed in black and white. The CD also includes information about the history of DMC, its products and accessories, color guides and a design catalogue of over 100 cross-stitch designs. To top it all, included are 4 tracks of youthful music from Canadian singer and songwriter Christine Evans.
So what are you waiting for? Rush to your nearest craft store nationwide and avail of this wonderful offer.
Promo period is extended until May 31, 2005.

(Approved by DTI-NCR)
Per DTI-NCR Permit # 1501 Series of 2005

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Partial list of redemption outlets: DMC Creative World (SM Megamall 6329978, Robinsons Pioneer EDSA 687-0290, Araneta Gateway, Cubao 911-2697); Dreams (Glorietta, Cainta), Cherry's (Waltermart branches); **Makati**: SM Makati, Carolinas, Stitch Circle, Chrisjekar; **Baclaran**: Reddrose, VCN; **Quiapo**: Manila Lace, Juderey, Sta. Ana, All Best, Joe Lace, New Valentino; **Taguig**: M.O. Fuentes; **Cainta**: Cecilia's, Cornershop; **Cubao**: VC Trading, 2 Good Trading; **Caloocan**: Marinessa, Morning Touch, Stitch and Copy, Pandayan Book Shop, Awesome; **Guadalupe**: Libays lace; **Mandaluyong**: K-mark; Modern Art, Precious Hand; **Pasig**: Noel Chan, Stitchers Foyer; **Manila**: Creative Hands, Goyies, Mirings, Ester Santiago; **Rizal**: Jon Jen **Alabang**: Pauline's, VCM; **Las Piñas**: RFC , GRC Designs, D'Franz LKS; **Divisoria**: Love Stitching, New State Lace, Sumo, Crosstrend, Javille; **Novaliches**: CI Marketing, Jef-Jef; **Quezon City**: Sobi's, Fine Point, Leony's, Gerirome, Zendy's Family Chest, Del's; **Cavite**: Pag-asa Frames, Cross-stitch Station, Sew & Stitch; **Marikina**: Anne Cherubs; **Sta. Rosa**: Elise; **Biñan**: Royce, Simplicity, Joaquin, Lucky CSR; **Cagagyan de Oro**: Kimshoppe, Ororama, Cagayan Eudcational, Everbest, TH, Goldcrest, Callejo; **Baguio**: Beaunik, Masterpiece, Crossline; **Cabanatuan**: Blas Edwards, JRP; **Cebu**: Cebu Familia House, Cebu Fashion & Co. Inc., V.Y. Lace Center; **Davao**: Craft Shop; **Palawan**: EMRB/TJOD's Cross stitch and Hand; **Ilo-ilo**: Famous Fashion Line, Home Store, Iloilo Shanghai, Stitches N' Things Center; **Tacloban**: Tacloban Crafts and Frames; **Bacolod** Threads Enterprises; **Zamboanga**: City Mart,Inc.; **Bulacan**: Cherubim Stitches N' Frames; **Pangasinan**: Greenmark; **Laguna**: Grik Framehouse Store 1; **Mindoro**: Hedy Gen. Merchandise; **Pampanga**: NS Rivera Frames and General, Odds & Ends, What-A-Stitch Gen. Merchandise; PLUS: AVAILABLE IN MORE METRO MANILA AND PROVINCIAL STORES VERY SOON !

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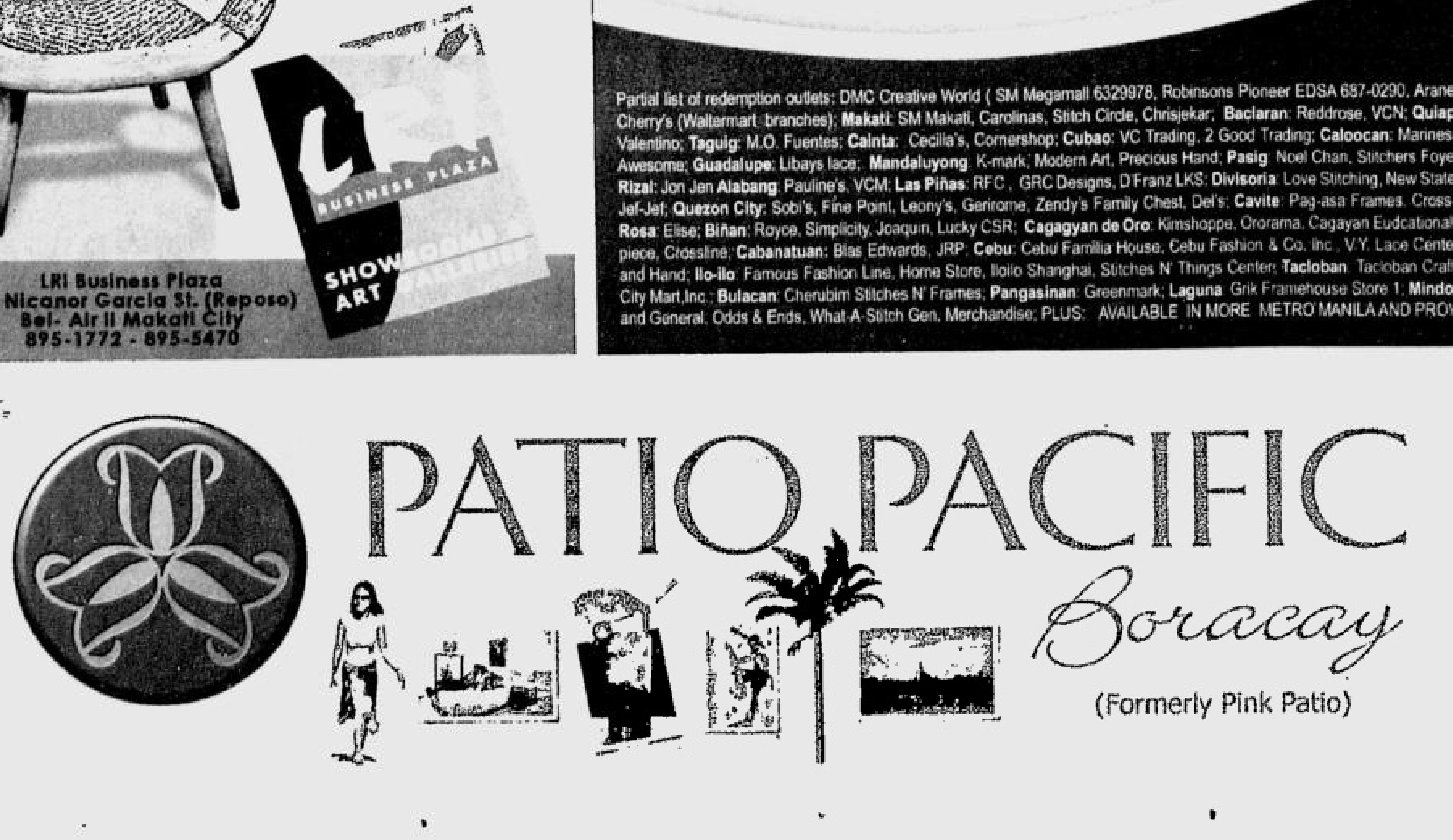

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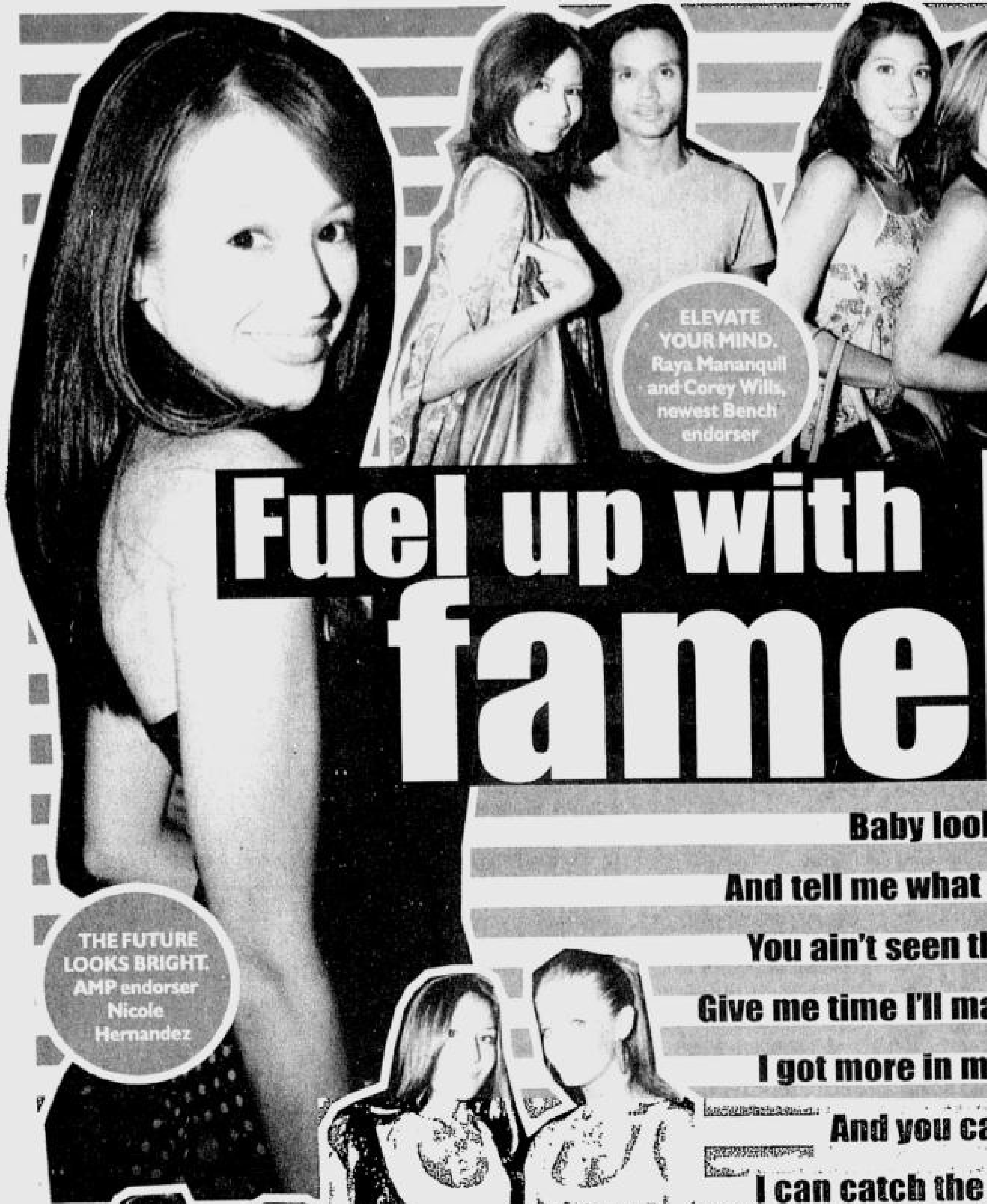

ELEVATE YOUR MIND. Raya Mananquil and Corey Wills, newest Bench endorser

SING IT GIRLS! Geneva Cruz and Rachel Alejandro belt it out on the dancefloor

THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT. AMP endorser Nicole Hernandez

A LOT OF FUNK AND SPUNK. [illegible]

Fuel up with fame

By Tim Yap

THE FUTURE is something I believe in. I take pride in being a part of this generation. No matter how crazy and reckless we seem, we know what we're doing. Trust us, underneath all the fluff is depth and substance—we just have a tendency to over accessorize. Contrary to what other people think, it's not always about the money. We believe in things that are bigger than us and we are hungry to make a difference.

Yes, we do party hard (as seen on this page) but we balance that with working even harder (well, some of us). The driving force is our desire to leave a mark—that even when we get older (God forbid), we've made this world a better and more fun and more fashionable place to live in.

Now sing with me.

Baby look at me
And tell me what you see
You ain't seen the best of me yet
Give me time I'll make you forget the rest
I got more in me
And you can set it free
I can catch the moon in my hands
Don't you know who I am
Remember my name
Fame
I'm gonna live forever
I'm gonna learn how to fly
High
I feel it coming together
People will see me and cry
Fame
I'm gonna make it to heaven
Light up the sky like a flame
Fame
I'm gonna live forever
Baby remember my name
Baby hold me tight
Cause you can make it right
You can shoot me straight to the top
Give me love and take all I've got to give
Baby I'll be tough
Too much is not enough
I'll grab your heart til it breaks
Ooo I got what it takes
Fame
I'm gonna live forever
I'm gonna learn how to fly
High
I feel it coming together
People will see me and cry
Fame
I'm gonna make it to heaven
Light up the sky like a flame

DIESEL SPRING SUMMER STATEMENT. Chingge Andrada and Victor Consunji

GEAR UP FOR THE PARTY. R[illegible] Moreno and K[illegible]

STYLE SPECIALISTS. Sigalit Djemal, [illegible] and Sandi Picornell

DIESEL is available at Greenbelt 3, Powerplant, Shangri-La plaza, Robinsons Place and Galleria

MTV JAMS WITH DIESEL. KC Montero and [illegible]

ROCKIN' AND ROLLIN'. MTV VJs Marc Abaya and Reema Chanco

LIMITLESS POSSIBILITIES. Rajo Laurel and Robby Carmona at Embassy

SUMMER SIZZLERS. These chicks are hot, hot, hot!

DIESEL NATION. Brent Javier and Hans Montenegro

JUNIOR CHAMP. Mark Bautista spotted at Diesel's Welcome to the Future party

C STYLE. Celine Lopez is [illegible] cool

STORE SPECIALISTS. Anton Mendoza, Anton Huang, Cindy Kurleto and a Diesel diehard

DUPAQ IN DIESEL. Jacques Dupasquier and Myrza Sison

FUELED BY FASHION. Darren Tieste, Ilona Movacek, Wendy and Tony [illegible]Hotung

Superfriends

Text and Photos by David Milan

Want to be on Superfriends? Send your photos and contact numbers to david_milan@lycos.com

Princess Violago

The fuel price hike in our country now means: More money to spend, less money for shopping!? I'd still have to invent a home-made gasoline made-up from olive oil!!
The only thing that doesn't come up in this country is: None, everything goes up... It's crazy!
The thing that refuels my mind and body is: Sleeping, sleeping, and sleeping!
E-mail: princess_violago@yahoo.com

Leonardo Salvacruz

The fuel price hike in our country now is: Outrageously high! I'll create a nationwide strike against the oil price hike
The only thing that doesn't come up in this country is our: Old used second-hand cellphones
The thing that refuels my mind and body is: Sleeping, drinking booze, and eating honey stars!!!
E-mail: toby_salvacruz@yahoo.com

Joel Calixto

The fuel price hike in our country now are: Effects of GMA's plan to lower the dollar exchange rate
The only thing that doesn't come up in this country is: The performance level of government officials
The thing that refuels my mind and body is: Dancing and sleeping
E-mail: nightsky_84@yahoo.com

Michelle Romero

The fuel price hike in our country now is: Useless, can't do anything about it
The only thing that doesn't come up in this country is our:
E-C-O-N-O-M-Y
The thing that refuels my mind and body is: A good exercise routine!
E-mail: rxqueen_gia@yahoo.com

[illegible]

The fuel price hike in our country now is: unnecessary, think that the government should do more than just raise the prices every week
The only thing that doesn't come up in this country is: Our people's morale and the President's rating
The thing that refuels my mind and body is: A prayer, a good book, and quality time with my loved ones
E-mail: docjash2002@yahoo.com

Janina Dizon

The fuel price hike in our country now is: torturing the less fortunate people who drive their vehicles to work just to get stuck in the middle of Metro Manila's traffic jam!!!
The only thing that doesn't come up in this country is: The SALARY of laborers!!!
The thing that refuels my mind and body is: A long bath with good music
E-mail: janina_dizon@yahoo.com

Discover Cebu via SuperFerry

SuperFerry, where your happy vacation starts with the journey, promises yet another fun-filled trip en route Cebu with its Sail Away package!

Spend three days and two nights in luxurious Cebu and enjoy the Cebu City Tour!

A city said to be "almost like Manila," Cebu boasts of amazing, busy commercial business districts and yet, one can experience city comfort without being far from spectacular beach resorts where you can relax or go for a swim or dive.

One of the top destinations in the Philippines, Cebu is known for its historical sights and beautiful beaches. It has grown into a dynamic tourist destination for its many international flights and world-class facilities to welcome commercial visitors.

See the sights of Spanish conquistadors, visiting significant historical and cultural landmarks in Cebu City like the Magellan's Cross, Fort San Pedro, Casa Gorordo Museum, Basilica Minore del Sto. Niño and the Taoist Temple in Beverly Hills Subdivision.

So, let SuperFerry take you to the Queen City of the South and have a complete holiday package from the various beach resorts in Mactan Island or at Cebu Mainland.

And while you're at it, also try the SuperCat Island Skip Trip from Cebu to Dumaguete!

Explore Dumaguete, from its idyllic cities and quiet countryside to its rich waters. SuperCat Island Skip Trip offers city and countryside tours for those who like to spend their days in a more relaxed fashion. Or if you are looking for adventure, join snorkeling tours or go dolphin and whale watching.

For customized SuperFerry Sail Away and SuperCat Island Skip Trip packages, visit www.SuperFerry.com.ph and www.supercat.com.ph, respectively. You may also call Tours and Group Sales (TGS) at 528-7100 for SuperFerry Sail Away or (+63) (32) 2349668 to 69 for SuperCat Island Skip Trip.

Celebrate the Golden Age of Philippine Cinema With

The 23rd FAP Awards

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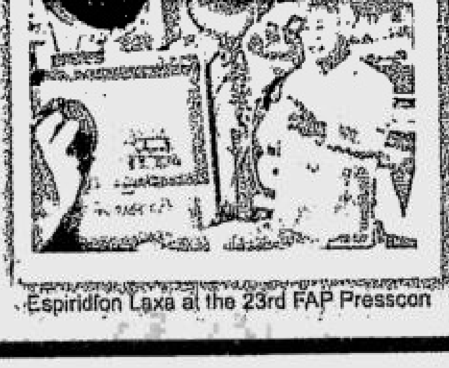


Espiridion Laxa at the 23rd FAP Presscon

Leo Martinez, Director General of the FAP, addresses the Press

Albert Martinez, the creative mind behind last year's FAP Awards, ensures another successful awards night.

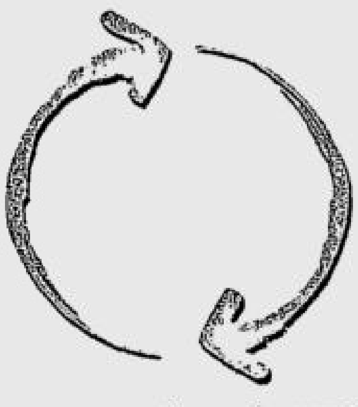
One glorious evening will trace over fifty years of Philippine movie magic. On the 23rd Film Academy of the Philippines (FAP) Awards Night, the red carpet will be unfurled. All this at the Westin Philippine Plaza on May 14, 2005. A night of elegance and glamour will ensue with the greatest attendance of stars ever assembled on an award's night.

At its official Press Conference, the announcement was made that the Academy together with Big Mango Studio Productions promises yet another unforgettable evening with the support of SMART Communications Inc. For the second year now, SMART will be a part of the Film Academy's history of giving honor to our home-grown talents in the industry. As it will again bear witness to the entry of new blood this 2005 with an unmistakably Filipino selection of films, giving reflection to the style of Philippine cinema today and providing a glimpse of what it could be tomorrow. FAP awardees have the distinction of being selected by their peers in the industry, and this has made FAP the most prestigious film awards in the country. Also for the second year, multi-awarded actor Albert Martinez takes the helm in ensuring that the FAP Awards night will be another milestone in Philippine Film awards history.

The Red Carpet affair scheduled to begin at 2pm will have the stars parading their 50s inspired fashion. Afterwards, the main awards show will take place featuring musical performances from some of the country's leading artists. The evening then culminates with the SMART Infinity MEGA Magazine Grand Ball where food, wine, and merriment continue. Until the break of dawn, attendees will be celebrating as Addict Mobile throws the biggest after dinner party.

SMART and Talk 'N Text subscribers can be part of the 23rd Film Academy of the Philippines Awards via the FAP service which gives subscribers access to downloads, updates and polls. Each SMS or download will earn subscribers raffle entries for a chance to attend the exclusive FAP dinner and awards night. To get the complete list of FAP services, just key in FAP and send to 286. We can all relive the glorious days of Philippine Cinema, by supporting the growth and development of our Philippine movie industry.

It's not just about watching movies...



It's about supporting our homegrown artists in the local film industry.

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